THE MASTER-PAINTERS OF BRITAIN: I

EDITED BY

GLEESON WHITE

THE MASTER PAINTERS OF BRITAIN

Mrs. Angelo Taylor as Miranda

THE MASTER PAINTERS OF BRITAIN

EDITED BY

GLEESON WHITE

SOMETIME EDITOR OF 'THE STUDIO'

AUTHOR OF 'ENGLISH ILLUSTRATION: THE SIXTIES'

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONDON
THE CAXTON PUBLISHING COMPANY
84, 85, 86 CHANCERY LANE, W.C.

Edinburgh : T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty

PREFACE

THE aim of this book is to present a selection of the best paintings of the most notable British Artists, and to give such an account of the painters illustrated, and of their pictures, as shall afford the reader a view of the development of painting in this country, and of the relation and indebtedness of one artist to another.

In the most attractive form possible then—that of a panorama of the most beautiful pictures extant—the work, it is hoped, will combine with an informal History of British Art, an unconventional method of acquiring a wider artistic culture. For it is by familiarity with the works of Master-Painters, such as Hogarth, Reynolds, Turner, and Raeburn, Rossetti, Burne Jones, Leighton, and Millais, and a hundred others who appear here, that the artistic faculty is developed, and it is only when it is so developed that the rare beauty of the masterpieces of art is appreciated, and intelligent appreciation of their merit becomes possible.

The pictures have not been selected to support any given theory of art, but to represent catholically all the different schools. Therefore the title 'Master-Painters' is singularly apt. For, whereas the accepted masterpieces that would provoke no opponent to question their right are few, the master-painters—men who in the way that appealed to them did the best that was in their power—are recognised as such by all wise men, even if personal taste forbids formal approval of their ideal, and if some are but little masters in comparison with the greatest. The realistic school is apt to be contemptuous of the poetic school; the picture with a dramatic or anecdotal subject is disliked by those who rank masterly technique expended upon certain aspects of nature as the highest form of art. Here, the effort has

been to give fine examples of all the varying styles which have been mastered by British painters, and to do so with no ulterior motive to exalt any one school to the detriment of the rest.

As a perfect anthology is rarely possible except in theory, it would be superfluous to explain why such a collection, despite every effort, must needs be not quite ideal. Yet it is offered as a fair, if not exhaustive, summary of British Art.

The work will be arranged on a chronological plan. The explanatory interleaf preceding each plate will explain fully the theme of the picture, and so supply what is so often lost—the pleasure of knowing the whole of the story represented. Interesting facts about the artist, information about the picture itself, its origin, its fate, and a few words of criticism from the Editor's pen, will thus accompany every illustration.

Historical and critical Introductions to each volume, and a Biographical Dictionary (in vol. iv.) of the Artists represented, will, it is hoped, further assist in attaining the aim of the work.

CONTENTS

VOL. I.

	PAGE
PREFACE,	v
INTRODUCTORY,	ix

PICTURE.	ARTIST.	NO.
Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee,	*An Unknown Painter*	1
Sigismonda,	*William Hogarth* (1697-1764)	2
Canvassing for Votes,	*William Hogarth*	3
Chairing the Member,	*William Hogarth*	4
The Ruins of the Villa of Mæcenas at Tivoli,	*Richard Wilson, R.A.* (1713-1782)	5
Heads of Angels,	*Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.* (1723-1792)	6
Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse,	*Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.*	7
The Blue Boy,	*Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.* (1727-1788)	8
Mrs. Siddons,	*Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.*	9
The Parson's Daughter,	*George Romney* (1734-1802)	10
Lady Hamilton—The Spinstress,	*George Romney*	11
An Experiment with the Air-Pump,	*Joseph Wright of Derby* (1734-1797)	12
The Death of the Earl of Chatham,	*John S. Copley, R.A.* (1737-1815)	13
Lord Nelson in the Victory's Cockpit, mortally wounded, Oct. 21, 1805,	*Benjamin West, P.R.A.* (1738-1820)	14
The Three Witches,	*H. Fuseli, R.A.* (1741-1825)	15
The Murder of the Princes in the Tower,	*James Northcote, R.A.* (1746-1831)	16
Canterbury Pilgrims,	*Thomas Stothard, R.A.* (1755-1834)	17
Canterbury Pilgrims,	*William Blake* (1757-1827)	17A
Death's Door,	*William Blake*	18
Boy with a Rabbit,	*Sir Henry Raeburn, R.A.* (1756-1823)	19
Stirling Castle,	*Alexander Nasmyth* (1758-1840)	20
Miranda (*Frontispiece*),	*John Hoppner, R.A.* (1759-1810)	21
The Inside of a Stable,	*George Morland* (1763-1804)	22
Door of a Village Inn,	*George Morland*	23
Admiral Duncan receiving the Sword of the Dutch Admiral,	*Samuel Drummond, A.R.A.* (1763-1844)	24

PICTURE.	ARTIST.	NO.
The San Nicholas and San Josef,	*Richard Westall, R.A.* (1765-1836)	25
The Windmill,	*John Crome* (1769-1821)	26
Nature,	*Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.* (1769-1830)	27
A Child with a Kid,	*Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.*	28
The Fighting Téméraire,	*J. M. W. Turner, R.A.* (1775-1851)	29
The Ducal Palace,	*J. M. W. Turner, R.A.*	30
The Battle off Cape Trafalgar,	*J. M. W. Turner, R.A.*	31
The Hay-Wain,	*John Constable, R.A.* (1776-1837)	32
Flatford Mill,	*John Constable, R.A.*	33
The Cornfield, or Country Lane,	*John Constable, R.A.*	34
Greenwich,	*Sir Augustus W. Callcott, R.A.* (1779-1844)	35
A Galiot in a Gale,	*John Sell Cotman* (1782-1842)	36
Battle of St. Vincent,	*Sir William Allan, R.A., P.R.S.A.* (1782-1850)	37
The Skirts of the Forest,	*David Cox* (1783-1859)	38
Porch of Ratisbon Cathedral,	*Samuel Prout* (1784-1852)	39
The Penny Wedding,	*Sir David Wilkie, R.A.* (1785-1840)	40
The Preaching of John Knox,	*Sir David Wilkie, R.A.*	41

INTRODUCTORY

TO the average man probably few things seem more lawless and fickle than the choice of certain paintings for honour, and others (which appear to him every whit as good) for dishonour. Nor would it be easy to explain simply the reason for the varying degrees of approval bestowed by artists upon pictures which may all be satisfactory as examples of good craft up to a certain level, and yet nevertheless range from the dullest commonplace to really fine, and at times great, Art.

To drag in the much-quoted phrase of Zola, 'Art is Nature seen through a temperament,' would be merely to confuse still more our imaginary seeker after truth. For if, unfamiliar with the tenets of the various schools into which modern painting is divided, he can grasp what the sentence means, still he is tempted to ask, whose temperaments interpret Nature, so that the result is Art, and whose produce merely mechanical transcripts of Nature that are *not* worthy so honourable a title? All this is but proof that no definition of Art has ever yet satisfied a tithe of those interested in the fine Arts; and no one of the attempted definitions has had the least chance of becoming memorable as a perfect explanation, unassailable as one of Dr. Johnson's best examples in his famous Dictionary; at once satisfying to experts, and intelligible to the man in the street.

Therefore, because the subtle qualities that separate works of Art (using the phrase in its most limited sense) from mere pictures have so far eluded a clear and accurate expression, the said man is apt to think the whole affair an affectation. Having come to this conclusion, he regards critics who profess to draw the line as men who would fain pose as superior judges on the strength of their ability to express indefinite and quite sentimental views in picturesque English, or if he be in more aggressive mood, he looks upon them as mere charlatans, who attempt to conceal their lack of meaning by using a jargon that conveys nothing to him, wherein are sprinkled such terms as 'chiar-oscuro,' 'tones,' 'values,' 'vibration,' 'plein-air,' and a hundred others, according to the fashionable 'art-slang' of the hour.

This volume has not been prepared with any intention of adding another failure to the list of responses to the query, 'What is Art?' Nor have the pictures which supply the real purport of the book undergone a mystic ordeal

which only permitted Art, with its biggest A, and its most inflated and affected superiority, to creep in. The title runs 'The Master-painters of Britain,' and the exclusion of the word Art is intentional. For the pursuit of picture-making, under even commercial aspects, is not in itself degrading, nor are such works contemptible in any way. They may teach certain parables, or record certain impressions of nature, in a way that gives genuine pleasure to educated, no less than ignorant people. But unluckily, the two classes of pictures, those which belong to art, and those which are merely well-manufactured, appear very much alike to the casual spectator, who is apt to be over-sentimental, in regarding them all as curious manifestations of something beyond the common efforts of ordinary mortals; or else to believe that the one which satisfies his own taste best, is therefore the best, and that the great masters he cannot appreciate, have been exalted by cranks and fanatics to support some esoteric theories.

These volumes include paintings that in every sense merit the most lofty title that could be found; but at the same time they aim to provide a broad and catholic selection of the most representative work of all classes which Britain has produced since a native school came into existence. Therefore, a few have been included which could not be ranked as masterpieces equal to those by Titian, Holbein, Velasquez, Rembrandt, and others of the innermost sanctuary, and some again that would fail to hold their own in a choice collection of works by European masters of secondary rank, painters like Fra Angelico, Rubens, or Teniers, to choose at random three examples of entirely distinct types. In British paintings of this order, there is not that finality of accomplishment which separates a masterpiece from the great works that are a shade less perfect. Nor in many, especially of half a century ago, is there any marked facility of technique, or complete recognition of the essentials of pictorial art. Without being inspired, they are not even sufficiently accomplished to exact admiration such as a huge allegorical composition by Rubens or a boisterous group of boors by Teniers compels, any more than they exhibit the simple directness of conventional statement and spiritual exaltation which places a Fra Angelico picture beyond the reach of matter-of-fact criticism.

English painting may be regarded, at least for our purpose, as starting into independent life with Hogarth. But the portraits of Dobson, a pupil (in a sense) of Van Dyck, and the compositions of Hogarth's father-in-law, Sir James Thornhill, might serve equally well as an arbitrary point of departure.

Had the purpose been to regard foreign artists, who settled in England, as sufficiently British for the purpose, it is obvious that the starting-point must have been placed much earlier. Possibly in such case Holbein would have been, in many senses, easily first, on a list which included Sir Anthony More, Jan Mabuse, Daniel Mytens, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Sir Peter Lely, Sir Godfrey Kneller, and others. The portrait of Claverhouse, which is herein included, has indeed been attributed, but with scant evidence to support the claim, to Lely, also to Kneller; whoever

painted it, whether he was native born or a naturalised citizen, it is in itself a very beautiful work, and will serve to show (supposing it to be by a foreigner) that British painters, at the time Hogarth arose, did not find the field unoccupied. There is no doubt that the first effort of pictorial art in Britain (leaving out of the question altogether early examples of mediæval times) was based chiefly upon that of the various foreigners, some of whom are indicated above; and perhaps only in portraiture approached anywhere near the standard of the best of them.

It would be unfair, however, to overlook the important work of the great miniaturists. These make quite a respectable show both in numbers and quality. Among them are Nicholas Hilliard (1547-1619), many of whose paintings are in Her Majesty's collection at Windsor; Isaac Oliver (1556-1617), of whom some examples are exhibited in South Kensington; Peter Oliver (1601-1660), whose most notable work, a 'Venus and Adonis,' is at Burleigh House; Samuel Cooper (1609-1672), of whom it has been said that he was the first British artist who gave a freedom to a miniature so that it seemed to have the vigour of an oil-painting. Nor must we forget portrait-painters like Robert Walker (? died about 1658), a contemporary of Van Dyck, who has left portraits of Cromwell, Ireton, and others; John Riley (1614-1691), whose best work has often been attributed to Sir Peter Lely; Charles Jervas (1675-1739), of whom a delightful anecdote is told—that surveying his own copy of a Titian, he exclaimed, 'Poor little Tit, how he would stare!' Robert Streater (1624-1680), serjeant-painter to Charles II., to whom is attributed the 'Moses and Aaron' in St. Michael's, Cornhill, and a landscape in the Dulwich Gallery; and Jonathan Richardson (? 1665-1745), whose portraits of Pope, Prior and other celebrities are in the National Portrait Gallery. To the above list may be added Thomas Hudson (1701-1779), the master of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose portraits of Handel and others are in the National Portrait Gallery. Frank Hayman (1708-1786) is known as an illustrator of Shakespeare, Milton, Don Quixote, etc., and a painting of the 'Finding of Moses,' attributed to him, is in the Foundling Hospital. All these, it is true, were, almost without exception, portrait-painters only, and some poor at that—merely artisans who worked by prescribed rule. This fact is supported by the well-known story of an independent sitter who insisted on being painted wearing his hat. He had his way; but, all the same, when the picture was sent home he found himself represented with another hat carried under his arm, after the mode of portraits of the hour! This anecdote, true or false, suggests more quickly than would pages of scientific analysis the dull routine in which many of these so-called artists worked. Many were simply travelling portrait-painters, who went from village to village, depicting people who could afford to be painted, in the same way that skilled pattern-weavers went from house to house to undertake work a little beyond the skill of the good housewife and her maidens.

With all due respect to the earlier British artists, one must conclude that if

Zola's definition of Art, 'Nature seen through a temperament,' be correct, it begins, so far as Britons are concerned, with Hogarth. If William Dobson (1610-1646), who had been educated by Franz Cleyn, before Van Dyck discovered and patronised him, saw Nature, and undeniably he did, yet he saw it mainly through the temperaments of his two masters; Hogarth saw it anew face to face. If he exaggerated the grotesque side, and did so with a distinct moral purpose, it does but prove that his temperament was closely allied to the Puritans, who have left us in literature a Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is peculiarly British in its admixture of humorous tendency towards the grotesque, and didactic teaching in the form of allegory.

This love of pictured moralities, whether realistically drawn from common life as Hogarth and Bunyan drew them then, or as Frith and Dickens have done in recent times; or, replaced by fancies that chose to depict the vices and virtues by abstract figures, as Spenser in *The Faerie Queen*, or Mr. G. F. Watts in our own day portrays them; or whether a romantic version of common life, as in the folklore (of Eastern origin), which has become part of English literature, told by Chaucer or William Morris, or painted by Sir Edward Burne-Jones—all these various phases of character-painting have a certain story-telling quality that links them together. On the other hand, huge allegorical compositions of heathen deities and living notabilities have always been exotic here; so too the grandiose historical picture, despite its frequent intrusion, seems not essentially British save in its accidental choice of costumes; nor does the battle-piece of the French find more than an occasional echo in the paintings of the English, and then it is chiefly devoted to naval subjects. Story-telling, landscape, and portraiture; these seem to be the main divisions of the earlier art of Great Britain. In these, before Hogarth, no masterpieces are to be found; but since his time there is much notable work, not undeservedly popular, which it were wiser to consider on its own merits, avoiding any comparisons with similar work of other nations.

To do justice to Hogarth, to place that great British artist at his right level, not merely as a satirist, which has long been granted, but as a painter pure and simple, is a task yet to be achieved. His reputation may be obscured for the moment, even as the dilettanti of his own day expended their scorn on his attempts to paint common life as he saw it. He hated 'the black masters,' as he termed the numerous canvases, mostly spurious, which were the mode in his day. He ridiculed the sham antique, and wished to compose pictures on canvas similar to those on the stage, desiring that they should be tried by the same art and criticised by the same criticism. It is curious to find that his contempt of the artificial convention did not lead him far enough to say that he strove to depict nature, but only to choose a less formal artifice. His groups, then labelled 'conversation pieces,' too often recall a good stage picture, where every actor is doing his best to provide appropriate 'business.' But compared with the artificial compositions of Thornhill or his

immediate predecessors, the light Hogarth let in, if not the open air, was at least that of common life, while in many pictures—notably in the 'Election' series—he forgot his avowed limit, and went, not to the stage, but to Nature herself. Nor did he bungle in his mere brush-work: although one cannot claim for him that superb technique, which in Velasquez, for instance, some people find almost too directly in evidence, because its legerdemain dazzles them, and may even divert attention from the thing painted, to the painting. Yet Hogarth's direct method still charms, and the evident sincerity of his work appeals with more force to-day than it could have done at a period when to be natural in manner, expression, or taste was to be vulgar.

But while crediting Hogarth with a bias towards realistic imitation of nature, provoked no doubt by the pedantry of extreme conventionality in vogue in his day, one must not forget that there is the art of making a picture a thing beautiful in itself, and for its own quality as a painting, quite apart from the beauty of its subject. This is an aspect of the case which is scarce suspected by the general public. They would turn with loathing from those misshapen dwarfs and imbeciles Velasquez painted so superbly, and are equally repelled by many of Hogarth's subjects. But the great Spaniard exalted his pictures to profound works of art: technical achievements of the highest dexterity, and daring solutions of problems of intricate colour, and lighting the most complex. Hogarth cannot be credited with similar powers; and so the two realists must not be put on the same plane, much less set in contrast. For the art of making a great picture—a masterpiece of painting—was not even in Hogarth's mind so far as his writings go to prove.

The two ways of regarding a picture must be clearly understood, and no one has explained it better than Mr. Henley in a preface to *A Century of Artists*. Indeed any attempt to re-state the fact would most probably result in distorting that fine piece of prose which has become part and parcel of one's artistic creed. Therefore it were more just to him and to the reader to quote his argument in full.

'In spite of the spread of culture and the popularity of art criticism, it is only too certain that to the public at large a picture is interesting in proportion as it is anti-pictorial. An eye for paint is no more general than an ear for music or a head for mathematics; where it does exist it stands as absolutely in need of education and development—it is incapable of doing itself justice without them—as the mathematical head or the musical ear; and as while the means of training are many it is only a few of them that are sound, there can be no manner of doubt that the eye for paint is only now and then worth anything to its owner, and may as commonly be found exulting in subject or disguised literature (they are convertible terms) as the eye which looks for nothing in a picture but the representation of natural fact, or some suggestion of historical or sentimental fiction. In other words, the interest of pure paint is so much the reverse of those which make for popularity, that the preponderance of the absolute pictorial quality in a gathering of pictures designed to satisfy the needs of a mixed public is not a virtue but a ruinous

demerit, inasmuch as they are few who are alive to the existence of such a quality and such an interest that to cater for them exclusively, were to insist upon feeding the bulk of the community upon food which it could not digest with profit and could only affect to relish.'

This passage, although recalled by the passing consideration of Hogarth in a hasty record of British Artists, is by no means limited to his manner of picture-making. At present, his method seems to us almost pictorial in the sense Mr. Henley employs the word; but in his day it was probably looked upon merely as 'literature in the flat,' a means of expressing moralities and parables, anecdotes and incidents, so that the unlettered might be able to interpret their lesson at a glance.

If Hogarth may be credited with founding the British school as regards subject pictures, Richard Wilson, only slightly later in date, deserves equally to be credited as the first great landscape-painter of British birth. 'In colour and aerial perspective, few landscape-painters have surpassed him,' is the sort of sentence one meets again and again, sometimes qualified with the addition, 'almost equal to Claude.' But Wilson, although most of his canvases are in the grand manner, compositions of symmetrical elegance, with classically disposed figures in the foreground, is also represented by one or two works almost as literal in their truth as those of the modern French *plein-air* school. 'Sion House' (exhibited in the Winter Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1890, unless one's memory is at fault) is one of these latter; that in its fresh pastoral greens and open effect recalled work a century later in date. Wilson no doubt prepared the way for Constable, but the difference between the two is so great that their names can scarcely be coupled together, except so far as both eschewed the traditionally composed picture, the one partially and occasionally, the other invariably and entirely. Certainly Wilson is not recognised abroad in any other light than as a very inferior forerunner of Constable. Dr. Richard Muther, as a rule peculiarly courteous to British painters, is extremely severe in his contemptuous summary of Wilson's art. 'Wilson,' he says, 'had a fixed notion that the Creator had only made Nature to serve as a framework to the "Grief of Niobe," and as a vehicle for classical architecture'—and goes on to show that, in spite of his well-balanced and graceful compositions in the manner of Claude, his success did not even last out his seventy years of life. But one does not abandon Wilson so easily. If he imitated Claude—and what painter of landscape did not at that day?—he showed germs of simpler and truer purpose; and is unquestionably the founder of the British school of landscape—a branch of the art wherein at times England has been first, and is still easily abreast of the world.

That this pre-eminent position is chiefly owing to John Constable may be granted fully, and yet Gainsborough, who antedates him by half a century, must not be robbed of his share of glory. At present, when portraits by this master fetch

record prices in our sale-rooms, there is danger lest the great part he played in the evolution of the English school of landscape-painting should be forgotten. For Gainsborough went direct to nature for his subjects, and despite a certain trace of the grand manner in the composition of his pictures, and to some extent in their colour, he must be reckoned among those who infused topographical records of scenery with a certain romance in harmony with the theme. Gainsborough did not pose mythical characters in his foregrounds : it is true that he hardly had the courage to reject the supernumeraries entirely, but he replaced gods and goddesses by peasants, who were avowedly accessories and not the hypothetical reason for the picture. It is true that some of these are more like studio-models, in sham rags, than veritable country-folk. But despite their conscious pose, and a slight trace of artificiality yet lingering in the landscape, nature was the source of his inspiration. This is evident from Sir Joshua Reynolds' account of his method of work. 'If, in his walks, he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house; and from the fields he brought home to his painting-room stumps of trees, weeds and animals of various kinds; and designed them, not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table, composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water.'

It is only fair to add that Sir Joshua, after appreciating this innovation, went on to warn his listeners against imitating the practice, and advised them to refer constantly to real nature; but all the same it affords an interesting example of the apologetic way in which painters, even at that date, regarded nature unadorned. As Hogarth wished his paintings to be as true as the stage, so Gainsborough, judged by this anecdote, would have them as real as the rustic landscape of a fernery or other triumphs of the indoor gardener. To note such half-heartedness is not to show disrespect to the artists, for such efforts throw light on the stern convention which had hitherto ruled, against which they were hardy enough to rebel; and serve also to show how lawless and revolutionary even this half-hearted reliance on nature must have appeared to those still in bondage to the traditions of the 'grand style.'

Taking Turner (although he was born only one year before Constable) as next in chronological order of the great British landscape-painters, it is much less easy to place him in due proportion to the others. For years—thanks to Mr. Ruskin's passionate eulogy—he has been ranked, not merely as a great painter—which no one will gainsay—but as the greatest of all English masters. A whole theory of the morality and didactic purpose of landscape has been founded upon him. Yet considered solely as a painter, his work is not reverenced by continental experts as highly as that of Constable. In fact, the ultimate rank of Turner is not likely to be settled for a long time.

The enormous power Mr. Ruskin exercised upon Victorian taste is gradually

waning: a reaction in favour of the Romantic school of Corot and Rousseau, and a predilection for the strongly expressed realism of Constable, both unite to depose Turner from the almost apostolic position to which he had been raised. If the true test of a man be found in his influence upon his descendants, we must own that, at the present day, the methods and theories of the best painters of all schools owe directly little or nothing to Turner, and almost everything to Constable. But to infer that Turner therefore is deposed, and become merely historically interesting as a British painter of sentimental landscape, would be to rush to the other extreme. Probably the truth lies between these poles, but on the whole nearer the estimate of Mr. Ruskin than of his opponents. So long as writers and laymen generally love to find in landscape literally 'sermons in stones, and books in running brooks,' so long is Turner sure of an enthusiastic if not peculiarly expert audience. Expert, that is to say, upon matters of paint, and of the qualities which make a picture a self-sufficient object without reference to its moral or its anecdote. He has been called 'the greatest interpreter of Nature of any time or country'; and this is only a mild and brief summary of the praise heaped upon one who deserved more critical appreciation. For the splendour of his ideas, and his adequate power to interpret them, his clear vision despite the classical convention he often relied upon, and, above, all his discovery of hitherto disregarded miracles of sky and sea, will always keep him among the greatest. A certain prettiness—far more apparent in engravings after his works, than in the oils or water-colours themselves—is no doubt responsible for much of the popularity he has enjoyed so long. That he was the first to set down certain effects of atmosphere, to paint with much poetic charm the evanescent moods of the common day, to impart a strong contrast between implacable nature and the feeble accidents of daily life, may be readily granted. As a maker of beautiful pictures he attracts the learned and unlearned. But if you compare his paintings with those of his great contemporary, Constable, you at once come face to face with irreconcilable differences. As it has been said, every Briton is born a disciple of Thackeray or Dickens, a Liberal or a Conservative, a Classicist or a Romanticist, so all landscape-painters have an instinctive bias towards Turner or Constable. Turner may be typical of a great Conservative force which experimented and dared everything, and yet kept in touch with precedent; Constable of the Democratic adventurer whose aim was to take Nature as he found her, with no thought of the methods of others, and with full recognition of the charm that mere paint is able to achieve. John Constable—the father of modern landscape—not merely threw on one side the classical tradition, which held certain artificial adjuncts essential to the proper presentation of vulgar nature (Gainsborough had already done as much), but went further and established a new school. When we remember that his 'Hay-Wáin,' shown in Paris in 1824, at once overturned the great French conventions of landscape, and started the movement that controls all that is vital in the art to-day, we can but feel proud that it was a Briton who initiated the

great departure. In Constable we find not merely a certain truth of statement, so that the reproductions here given look, to an untrained eye, more like photographs direct from nature than from a painting; he gives us this in a way that is superbly masterly as regards its technique, and controlled the while by the great principle of 'selection' as opposed to a mere imitation of landscape such as a looking-glass offers you.

The average visitor to a picture-gallery is apt to wonder why a Constable landscape or a Whistler nocturne attracts devotion from the expert, while some other picture which he thinks much more like nature is ignored. But the average visitor is not apt to trouble himself with the real aspect of nature. He has preconceived ideas of landscape, and these are mostly based on quite conventional standards. To such an one grass is always green, the sky always blue, and those distant details which his memory helps him to understand, he honestly believes he sees veritably with his naked eye. Those who study pictures earnestly must needs refer to nature perpetually. Not to prove that any master is wrong, but to discover if they can—and where a master is concerned, such discovery is but a matter of time—that Nature justifies the painting. To an honest student, patient observance of the effects of light and shade and colour soon upsets all preconceived notions: unless he be colour-blind, he must needs admit that the infinite variety of aspects of the same scene under changing effects of atmosphere and light, differ more from each other than do representations of it by several masters, who may take the same theme for their subject. Then he awakes to the fact that the pictures which please are those which confirm a student's observation, and make him love, 'when first he sees them, painted things he had passed a hundred times, nor cared to see.' Your first glimpse of the tropics justifies colour that had before seemed crude and impossible. A first trip up the Thames on a grey day quite changes a foreign painter's estimate of Mr. Whistler. So the obvious moral might be worked out. Here the intention is to raise doubts in the mind of the average person for him to solve at leisure: not to dogmatise, not to insist that he shall bow the knee to this or that shrine, but to ask him before he condemn, to endeavour to study faithfully the appearance of things, as distinguished from mental pictures formed from knowledge gathered from tradition, from books, and from other pictures.

As with Hogarth, we face the birth of modern *genre*, and with Constable the maturity of modern landscape, so with Reynolds we reach the height of British portraiture. Gainsborough is not far off, perhaps; Romney, Raeburn, Hoppner, and a noble band of most excellent artists, are near; but as Shakespeare towers over the brilliant group of Elizabethan dramatists, so Reynolds is *the* great portrait-painter among his peers.

Of all subjects that impress an average visitor to a gallery, portraits, unless the personage depicted be a popular hero, are most likely to be undervalued, yet the love for a great portrait, once it controls you, abides steadily, though other tastes may

wax and wane. To not a few people, a certain portrait of a 'Doge' by Bellini keeps an unalterable position as their chief favourite in the National Gallery. As the mood varies, so a Titian, a Veronese, or, perhaps, a Botticelli may in turn enchant you, but the Bellini portrait all the while retains its place, no less surely your appreciation of the wonderful portrait of a 'Tailor' by Moroni never fluctuates with any mood.

How great Reynolds really is no ordinary process-block can even suggest. The superb 'Tragic Muse,' as we see it here, does not hint at the real splendour of the picture itself.

If a word debased by everyday use may be applied to an artist of Sir Joshua's rank, one might say that his work is that of a gentleman; a high-bred courtesy reveals itself everywhere. Nor has this quality aught to do with the man himself. Many irreproachably correct and blameless painters achieve nothing but blatant vulgarity; others, whose lives were degraded and even vicious, have kept their art absolutely beyond reproach. The conventional Sir Joshua, as we happen to know, was a little pompous and a little grandiloquent; but in his work the pomposity becomes stateliness, the grandiloquence changes to grandeur. But the true Sir Joshua was not hidden from his contemporaries. Two lines in Goldsmith's famous epitaph—

> 'When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
> He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff'—

show you a personality which you would scarcely suspect from the sonorous periods of the Discourses. It is hard to keep this preface from straying into an anecdotal, round-about paper on so tempting a subject.

However, harking back to our text, portraiture as the third great division of British art at this period, all one could say in praise of Reynolds' work would be incomplete unless accompanied with adequate praise of his fellow-artists, who added masterpieces to our galleries by the score. One thing must never be forgotten, that these masterpieces were often enough the pot-boilers of the men who did them. With celebrities and women of fashion both time and patience are limited; and even their vanity rarely sustains them over many sittings. So we discover by written evidence that many portraits, which now fetch thousands of pounds, were painted in a day or two for a very moderate fee. The resources of a craftsman are put to their severest test on such occasions. It has been said that a musician should never perform in public a piece which he considers difficult; it is not until he has mastered in private difficulties a hundred times as great, that he may venture to show his attainment.

The few subject pictures of Reynolds, conscientiously undertaken and produced, doubtless, with prolonged effort, fail to please, compared with the average portrait which he did, probably, under the stress of the moment. That the fugitive pigment which he used has caused the once famous 'Holy Family' to decay, so that it is no

longer exhibited in the National Gallery, is regrettable. Yet, all the same with many of its fellows, it is at best only a very tolerable imitation old master. Imitation of any order soon palls; the sham classic, the sham Dürer may please to-day, but there is no hope, judging from past experience, of its pleasing to-morrow. It is work born of the times, with all its follies and failings, but also with its life and effort, that stays. It may be that the illustrations of a modern comic paper will outlive popular academic successes which are mere rearrangements of archæological facts or new adaptations of hackneyed properties. The man of the hour is often the man of the century also, and those who worship the hero of the moment at times betray unconsciously more prescience than those who adore the orthodox professor of scholastic reputation. We laugh at the humour of Phil May's drawing, or are mildly excited by the portraits of a fashionable painter, or take credit for discovering some little appreciated landscape artist who exhibits at galleries which do not inspire reverence in critics, nor coax high prices from buyers. Yet, unpalatable as the conclusion may be, the study of the past enforces its truth; one such illustrator or one such painter of to-day is most probably destined to be the hero of the twenty-first century critics, who will pass by the work of presidents of societies and other venerated authorities without a glance, to marvel at the work of some artist whom no one to-day regards seriously, especially if he be still alive and yearning for sympathy.

Nevertheless, the average person should not thereby become convinced of the ultimate verity of his own taste. Because critics are fallible, it does not follow that the uncritical must needs be infallible. For, as a matter of sober fact, nearly all the great masters received ample recognition from a few 'fit and chosen' in their lifetime; and the verdict of centuries later is not necessarily unchangeable. As we see in the typical instances here chosen, Hogarth, Constable, and Reynolds were fully recognised at the time, and posterity only indorses that verdict. Yet some other masters, then ignored, now find a more sympathetic audience than they did when living; and this may not be due entirely to their merit, but, in part, to the accident that they anticipated certain qualities which find favour with us. But one thing is absolutely sure, namely, that the course of Art is not always progressing; it ebbs and flows, and witnesses strange retrogressions. The period of this volume includes far greater men than does that which immediately followed. The far past and to-day rarely fail to please; it is the day before yesterday and yesterday which have lost their power to charm us by novelty and instant sympathy with our moods, and have also not yet acquired the glamour of ancientry, or the sentimental forgiveness we are willing to bestow on ancestors sufficiently remote. It is easy to praise our great-great-grandfathers or to discuss even their failings with tenderness; but when uncles and cousins are in question, much more rigid criticism is inevitable.

Several classes of pictures so far ignored in this prefatory gossip, and so sparsely represented among its illustrations, have never flourished greatly among us. The

1. *Portrait of Graham of Claverhouse* (*Painter unknown*).

SIGISMONDA

By William Hogarth

TO the general public Hogarth is chiefly known as a caricaturist, or, at best, as a moralist preaching the triumph of Virtue. But it should not be forgotten that no little of the coarser caricature we associate with Hogarth is not his own, but belongs distinctly to various engravers, who vulgarised and cheapened his work to an extent hardly conceivable. In 'Sigismonda' we have his venture in the grand style, to which he was provoked by the popularity of spurious replicas of great masters, that the dilettante of his day worshipped as blindly as they adored genuine paintings by the same hands. This picture, a commission from Sir Richard Grosvenor, for which the artist was to receive 400 guineas, was finished in 1759 and refused by his patron. At the sale of Mrs. Hogarth's effects it fetched only 56 guineas, Alderman Boydell being its purchaser; but, resold at Christie's in July 1807, it fell to Mr. Anderdon for its original price (£400).

It is both amusing and depressing to read the abuse poured on this ill-fated canvas. Lord Orford, in terms far too brutally frank to be quoted here, declared it to be more ridiculous than any of the vile copies which Hogarth protested against. The artist who had taken subscriptions for an engraving 'had the sense to suppress it.' A later and more sober critic says it is 'rather French and marked with mind (*sic*), and would probably have been better had it not been so often altered on the suggestion of different *critical friends*.' To-day it occupies a place of honour on the line of the most jealously guarded Gallery in Europe.

Sigismonda, daughter of Tancred, Prince of Salerno, wedded her father's page, a youth of poor but noble birth. This being discovered, the page, Guiscardo, was strangled and his heart sent in a golden cup to Sigismonda, who, after weeping over it, poisoned herself. Dryden, in his poem, 'Sigismunda and Giuscardo,' tells the tale felicitously enough. It is interesting to compare the eighteenth century conception of a scene not essentially unlike that of Isabella and the pot of basil, with the various pre-Raphaelite versions of the other ill-fated heroine with her dead lover's head in a vase. Possibly the painting by Hogarth fails to depict the supreme tragedy of the incident; but, all the same, it is not an ignoble conception, and is still vital and full of interest.

It was bequeathed to the National Gallery by Mr. Anderdon in 1879.

2. *Sigismonda (Hogarth).*

CANVASSING FOR VOTES

By William Hogarth

THIS and the following picture, although part of the same series, show Hogarth in two different aspects. The first is a most delightful transcript of bucolic life: if all the figures were absent it would still be of interest as a record of a typical English village of the middle of the eighteenth century. The second is a poignant satire, where the setting is of small account. It is a series that shows the artist at his best, and, being far less hackneyed than the 'Marriage à la Mode,' 'The Rake's Progress,' and the rest, one can reconsider the paintings without the prejudice which has been aroused against others owing to their miserably engraved reproductions in cheap publications.

Here, as in most of Hogarth's satirical works, every trifle enforces the moral of the whole. The painted cloth which the travelling showman has hung on the inn-sign is intended, we are told, to ridicule the 'clumsy and tasteless building of the Horse Guards, the arch of which is so low that the sovereign's state-coachman cannot pass with his head on'; the lower part has a picture of a buffoon scattering largesse to a crowd. The figures in the foreground tell their story too plainly to need any comment, and the turbulent mob attacking the rival inn also reveals its intentions clearly enough. Above this group is the man sawing the sign through between himself and its support—a pictured proverb which has become a hackneyed quotation in political satire ever since.

As a record of social life in Merrie England this 'Canvassing for Votes' is full of interest. The architecture is obviously the source whence we have derived the so-called 'Queen Anne' revival. Despite its very strong suggestion of a stage set, which is due in great part to the grouping of the characters on the right and to the table theatrically askew, and especially to the position of the actors in the immediate foreground, as if a painted cloth and not real nature were the background,—despite the distribution of motives, so that the eye successively lights upon three or four distinct centres of interest, the painting is far more than a curious record. Its brush-work appears surprisingly when you remember that Hogarth intended it merely as a subject to be engraved, and not as a finished painting.

It is reproduced here by permission of the Trustees of the Soane Museum, London.

3. *Canvassing for Votes* (*Hogarth*)

CHAIRING THE MEMBER

By William Hogarth

THIS, the fourth and last of the Election series, is supposed to allude to an incident of the Oxford election of 1754, but it may be taken as a typical representation of the close of the poll in the times of pocket-boroughs and open bribery. Mobs cannot be painted in rose-colour any more than revolutions can be quenched with rose-water. That squeamish people then as now are more disgusted than pleased with this picture is probably true. But when you study the original canvas the direct handling of the whole work tempts you to rank it perhaps even more highly than it deserves.

The condition of these four pictures is notably fine. The story goes that they were shown to Garrick by Hogarth, who solicited the actor's subscription for one of a hundred sets of engravings therefrom, which he intended to publish at two guineas the set. Garrick was so pleased with the paintings that he offered the painter 200 guineas for the originals, and also gave him permission to publish his engravings as well. After a short sojourn at Fonthill they were purchased by Sir John Soane, R.A., and are still at his old home in Lincoln's Inn Fields, now the Soane Museum. They seem of late to have escaped the popularity that they deserve, and this probably is due to the fact of 'The Rake's Progress,' far more melodramatic in its interest, hanging in the same collection. These have no continuous story depicted in striking scenes, and above all no female interest, if we except the second, an orgy which is amazingly full of broad humour. Yet even this and the third, which represents 'The Polling,' are by no means scenes of unalloyed debauchery: in the one a man dead from overfeeding is being bled by a barber-surgeon; in the other you see a dying voter carried to the poll—grim touches that make the satire bite more deeply.

Hogarth did not mince matters, but stated his facts as remorselessly as a Zola, and often with as little regard for the more noble fact that the whole is greater than its parts. For in the two here reproduced, we find overmuch variety of secondary incidents, a perpetual commentary on the main subject, as in the 'We must die all' on the dial, in the boys placing gingerbread spectacles on the death's head, and a hundred other whimsical trifles that distract attention. But if they injure the picture they reinforce the anecdote, and Hogarth, great painter as he undoubtedly was, was on this occasion as on others a picture-maker with a purpose which at times was didactic and at times diffuse.

The picture is included by permission of the Trustees of the Soane Museum, London.

4. *Chairing the Member* (*Hogarth*).

THE RUINS OF THE VILLA OF MÆCENAS AT TIVOLI

By Richard Wilson, R.A.

IF Wilson, during his life, failed to obtain wide popularity, he was by no means without staunch admirers, and in the early part of this century was appreciated adequately. Circumstances point to a near revival of appreciation for his work. In 1814 a contemporary notice spoke of his Italian pictures as 'fine compositions mingling the loveliest appearance of nature, when nature is most beautiful with dreary and dark desolation, and every touching image which decaying grandeur in the noblest works of art could suggest to a classical imagination. From these sources emotion is engendered by the magic power of the painter to which we can apply no other word than sacred.' This passage is quoted here less for the sake of Wilson than to show in what spirit the classical landscape appealed to its devotees in the early Twenties.

The picture itself shows the famous villa of Mæcenas, and also the 'Blandusian spring of Horace' (whose own villa stood behind the trees to the left), introduced here by Wilson at the suggestion of a patron, although it is some distance from the spot. The temple below is one dedicated to the river-god Tiber.

The arbitrary arrangement of the trees and dark foreground—such as 'makes a frame through which the landscape shines out brightly'—is a good specimen of the 'classical,' as opposed to the 'natural,' landscape. Its artifice may be a little too apparent. and there are not wanting other and less important works which show that Wilson, when he forgot the Italian masters, did not disdain to paint Nature at first hand, instead of through their spectacles.

This painting, the first of five of the same subject, was commissioned by Sir George Beaumont, B.A., who presented it to the National Gallery in 1826.

5. *Ruins of Mæcenas' Villa* (*Wilson*).

HEADS OF ANGELS

By Sir Joshua Reynolds, p.r.a.

THIS picture, which is undoubtedly one of the most popular of Sir Joshua Reynolds' works, is a study of one head in different positions. The little lady from whom it was painted, Miss Frances Isabella Ker Gordon, was the only child of Lord William Gordon. Although over a hundred years have passed since it was first exhibited, it has not become old-fashioned, but is in almost every respect as modern in its feeling as if painted but yesterday. Despite its close obedience to one of the most curious conventions of the old masters, the cherub—a detached head furnished with fluffy wings—there is little sense of aught but beauty. While nearly all other mythical beings in pictures or sculptures are apt to appear slightly grotesque to any age but the one that evolved the type, this convention of the cherub still pleases and still fascinates, whether on the canvases of Correggio, in the majolica of the brothers Della Robbia, or in this painting of the great English master. It would be curious to trace the cause of this abiding delight in cherubs. Angels have changed from the glorified youths of the early masters to the severe ladies with side-curls of the early Victorian period, and still later to the blessed damosels in close-clinging draperies, with their hair arranged after the mode of the hour. But the cherub, from the time it was first depicted, despite its perversion on tombstones, despite its most feeble variants in chromolithography, is yet acceptable. No English version of the theme is more likely to retain its popularity than this, which is a masterpiece of its kind; it disarms criticism, and pleases a connoisseur no less than a layman. Possibly it is the irresistible beauty of childhood, here removed from all accidents of costume, which has given it immortality. Be it what it may, Sir Joshua's 'Angel Heads' (as it is somewhat erroneously entitled) remains to prove that even 'pretty' faces may become of abiding beauty when a master paints them.

The painting is No. 182 in Room xvi. of the National Gallery. It was shown in 1787 at the Royal Academy. Sir William Gordon paid £100 for it. In 1841 Lady William Gordon presented it to the National Gallery. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

6. *Heads of Angels* (*Reynolds*).

MRS. SIDDONS AS THE TRAGIC MUSE

By Sir Joshua Reynolds, p.r.a.

THERE are two versions of this painting, and although the one in the possession of the Duke of Westminster is always considered to be the original, it is said that Mrs. Siddons herself preferred to regard the other (here reproduced), now at Dulwich Gallery, as the first. Two stories of its conception are current. According to one which Mrs. Siddons is said to have told Mr. Phillips it was the production of pure accident. The picture had been commenced in quite another pose, but while the artist was mixing some colours his sitter accidentally changed her position, which he then requested her to adopt. According to the other, Sir Joshua said to Mrs. Siddons, 'Ascend your undisputed throne, and bestow on me some idea of the Tragic Muse.' The great actress complied, and at once assumed the very striking attitude which the picture records.

Although the pose may be out of touch with modern realism, despite the introduction of allegorical figures 'Crime' and 'Remorse' in the background, despite a certain theatrical rather than dramatic intensity in the conception, the picture is hardly less impressive to us than it was to its first devotees. It is interesting to compare this work with Mr. John Sargent's 'Lady Macbeth'—a portrait, by a great contemporary, of an actress who occupies the nearest equivalent place to that held by Mrs. Siddons. In the one a perfectly symbolical figure is given; in the other an actual character of Shakespeare is portrayed, but in an incident (raising the crown above her head in fierce triumph) which does not occur in the play. The idea in each is not so far removed that a comparison between the old method and the new may not be drawn. In the first a certain repose is felt; but if the brooding figures at the back were not introduced the subject would scarce betray itself. It would do no less well for an embodiment of 'Inspiration,' or of any other suppressed emotion. The other would always suggest a tragic incident no matter if its title were forgotten: the arrested movement of the figure, its vigorous lines, all denoting action, stamp it as born of the nervous, restless, nineteenth century. The first has a serious purpose, and the artificiality of the grand manner of the earlier epoch; the latter, the energy and rush of a more bustling time. It were folly to pit one against the other, but all the same it is instructive to study two representations of the most popular actress of her time, each by the most popular, and possibly the greatest, portrait painter of his day.

The Dulwich picture was bought by M. Desenfans, in 1789, for £735; he bequeathed it, with others, to Sir Peter Francis Bourgeois, the founder of the Dulwich Gallery, whence it has been reproduced here.

7. *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* (*Reynolds*).

THE BLUE BOY

By Thomas Gainsborough, r.a.

THIS portrait of Master Jonathan Buttall, which is better known as 'The Blue Boy,' is supposed to have been painted as a protest against Sir Joshua Reynolds' dictum, that the masses of a composition should be warm in colour. Whether the picture itself effectually proves the contrary is still an open question; but considered on its own merits, apart from any theory, it well deserves its great popularity. In Sir Joshua's famous Fourteenth Discourse on the character of Gainsborough, he does not allude directly to this picture, but certain passages read as though it was in his mind. The disputed point, whether blue can be used effectively as the chief colour in a picture, despite Gainsborough's attempt, is still open. Most critics still think that so cold a colour does not supply an effective scheme. But although 'The Blue Boy' keeps the promise of the title, further study shows much warmth in the shadows, and a distinct effort to minimise the mass of blue in every way. That it was painted in direct challenge to Reynolds' Eighth Lecture, delivered in 1778, is impossible, if 1770, the date usually assigned to it, be correct. The matter has been discussed at length in 1870 in the columns of *The Times* and elsewhere. Reynolds, to support his view, painted 'A Yellow Boy.' There is also 'A Pink Boy' by Gainsborough, and 'A Green Boy' by Hugh Robinson, a little-known but exceedingly capable artist, who died at the age of twenty-four. But whether these, and Gainsborough's 'Lady in Blue,' were distinct efforts to oppose or support the theory that the masses of colour in a picture need not always be warm, is at least doubtful. Those interested in the dispute should consult Mr. F. G. Stephens' elaborate summing-up in the catalogue of the Grosvenor Gallery Winter Exhibition, 1885.

The painting is the property of the Duke of Westminster, K.G., by whose courtesy this reproduction has been made direct from the picture. It is thus in many respects more trustworthy than many versions before the public.

8. *The Blue Boy* (*Gainsborough*).

MRS. SIDDONS

By THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A.

WHO does not know this exquisite portrait of the great tragic actress, by Gainsborough? Whether you see it in the National Gallery, in a mezzotint or photograph, or even in the coloured supplement of a Christmas number, it never ceases to retain some of its charm as a perfect portrait of a perfect model. Yet a most irreverent anecdote has come down to us of its painting. Gainsborough found Mrs. Siddons' nose would not 'come' to his liking. 'Bother the nose, there's no end to it,' he exclaimed, after many failures. In the presence of the stately picture such a flippant joke would not be worth recalling were it not to prove that the dignity and beauty of this painting were only achieved through failure and much sustained effort. It is pre-eminently the picture of a lady, and of a superbly intellectual woman. Supposing the title to be lost, the picture would please none the less, for it is all-sufficient in itself. That it chances to represent a great actress is an additional pleasure; but if contemporary engravings are correctly accurate, it is not so much a portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the world saw her, as of the ideal Mrs. Siddons that Gainsborough preferred should be handed to posterity. The idealisation he has imparted; but it is not of the usual order—it has not been spent in an effort to make a 'pretty' face, but to emphasise the 'grand air' which contemporaries unite in attributing to the actress.

Despite the splendour of Sir Joshua Reynolds' 'Tragic Muse,' you realise, from this everyday portrait, far more the attributes which contemporaries never wearied of recording. It is a thing of abiding beauty, and a worthy monument to a fame even as great as that which is accorded to 'Sarah Siddons.'

Painted in 1784, it was purchased for the National Gallery, in 1862, from Major Main, who had married a grand-daughter of Mrs. Siddons. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

9. *Mrs. Siddons* (*Gainsborough*).

THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER

By George Romney

IT would be superfluous to print here a rhapsody upon this charming picture, which is a general favourite. Nor is it quite certain who is represented. Rumour alleges it to be a portrait of a Miss Young, who afterwards became Mrs. Pope, a celebrated actress of her time. But, stripped of all association, with no scandal or fame to give it added interest, it holds its own among the pictures that have always had a true body of disciples. The foolish accessories which have at times been deemed essential to the attractiveness of the portrait of a fair woman are not encountered here. Romney in this instance did not think it necessary to dress her up as a heroine of romance, nor to undress her as a goddess. Provided the painter can fix on his canvas something of the charm of the eternal feminine—so long as a world of men exists—he will not lack an audience. The more modest and unconscious she appears in his portrait, the more surely will she maintain her power of attraction. As a rule, the beauties of history, whether chaste or frail, appear merely commonplace, if not even still less charming, in their portraits. Others, likenesses of unknown ladies, perhaps because you approach them with preconceived ideal, never fail to please entirely. One may fancy that these were painted for their beauty alone, neither for a patron nor a populace, but just to satisfy the painter's whim. Certainly such a theory might find not a few instances to support it, although if this be really a portrait of Mrs. Pope, the argument fails in its case.

This work, now in the National Gallery, was purchased in 1878 at the sale of Mr. Anderdon's pictures.

10. *The Parson's Daughter* (*Romney*).

LADY HAMILTON
THE SPINSTRESS

By George Romney

THE name of Romney is so continually and intimately associated with that of Lady Hamilton, that it is impossible to speak of his work without constant reference to 'Emma Hart,' who so bewitched the great portrait-painter that he was never happy when working on any other subject, and reduced the number of his sitters in order to devote more time to endless studies of her beauty.

At a time when Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton figure as the *dramatis personæ* of more than one stage-play, when anecdote and history are ransacked to produce fresh biographies of the heroine, it would be folly to attempt to give even the baldest summary of the subject of this picture. Among other well-known versions of the model are 'Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante (National Gallery), as Ariadne, as Miranda, as a Wood-nymph, as Circe, as Euphrosyne, as St. Cecilia, as Mary Magdalene, as Joan of Arc, as Sensibility,' and other ideal subjects, with many that are portraits simply, without pretence of being idealised. This reproduction is from a mezzotint and not from the painting itself, but it gives a very fair idea of the picture. Yet any black-and-white version of a Romney must needs suffer much, for the flesh-tints he used impart no little of the peculiar charm that he still preserves. At present there is a tendency to place Romney as the peer of Reynolds and Gainsborough, if not above both; but an earlier and more just verdict credits him with certain qualities of grace, colour, and sympathetic line beyond either, and yet admits that in intellectual vigour and vanity he is far below Reynolds, and in spirituality and richness of colour below Gainsborough. The world of art would be distinctly poorer did it lose the charming women that came from his brush, and especially the many portraits of the 'divine lady' ('I cannot give her any other epithet, for I think her superior to all womankind': so Romney wrote to Hayley in 1791) whom Nelson in his dying words committed to the care of the British nation.

The 'Spinstress' is owned by the Earl of Normanton. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

11. *The Spinstress* (*Romney*).

AN EXPERIMENT WITH THE AIR-PUMP

By Joseph Wright of Derby

A PICTURE which tells its own story, although it be of the most everyday incident, has always delighted, and probably will always attract, humanity. For at times even those technically interested in art forget the analytical study, and are amused by the anecdote. Yet Wright of Derby must not be classed merely as one who told his stories in pictures instead of words. He set himself to solve certain problems of artificial light, and succeeded to an extent that warrants an honourable place among British painters. Reynolds himself affirmed that 'by candle-light not only objects appear more beautiful, but from their being in a greater breadth of light and shadow and uniformity of colour, nature appears in a higher style, and even the flesh seems to take a higher and richer tone of colour.' Certainly in this picture Wright did his best to obtain new effects in the colour of objects seen by artificial light; perhaps to-day we are apt to dismiss his method as savouring more of theatrical than true illumination. It is interesting to compare later firelight pictures, say Mr. Frank Bramley's 'Saved,' with this, and to note how much more difficult is the problem chosen by the modern painter: not to depict firelight alone, but the cold air of daylight as well upon the same canvas. It is also interesting to find that Wright's position with certain critics was re-established by this painting. Although an associate of the Royal Academy, he declined the full membership when proffered him, chiefly, it would appear, from the way his pictures had been hung, 'so close to the floor that the frames and canvases were damaged by the feet of the crowd.' A storm raged in the press; he was reviled and defended in prose and verse, but parallel passages given in a monograph on his life (by Mr. W. Benn) go to prove that this 'Air-Pump' so pleased his former drastic critics that they were again unanimous in praising him.

The painted incident is so clearly explained that a printed description is needless. Like many pictures of its time—and not a few to-day—it tells its story a shade too plainly. In real life—and this is a realistically treated subject—a group of people rarely express their emotions simultaneously and so dramatically in such picturesque attitudes. All the same, it is an interesting type of the domestic melodrama—the picture which, if not quite a morality, is bent on enforcing a moral of a sort, as well as upon depicting certain effects of light and colour.

The painting was presented to the National Gallery by Mr. Edward Tyrell in 1863.

12. *The Air-Pump* (*Wright*).

THE DEATH OF THE EARL OF CHATHAM

By John S. Copley, R.A.

ON looking through a biographical list of Royal Academicians it is surprising to find so many of American birth. Yet, as the Academy enrolled them, we may annex them as British without infringing the Monroe doctrine; art need not be parochial in any sense. The subject of this picture is entirely British. The scene is in the Painted Chamber of the old House of Lords, the time April 7th, 1778, when the Earl of Chatham (William Pitt), after speaking on the necessity of acknowledging the Independence of that part of the British North American colonies now the United States, fainted and was carried home to die on the 11th of May following.

There are fifty-five portraits of peers in this picture, the most prominent figure to the right being that of the Duke of Richmond, a patron of the arts. At this date the topical interest in the noblemen depicted is hardly vital enough to make it necessary to reproduce here the key to the painting which hangs near it in the Gallery. As a record of the demolished building it has a distinct interest; even although considered entirely as a painting it does not provoke one to peculiar enthusiasm. The conditions of a work of this kind, which demand a large number of heads to be arranged and lighted so that each may reveal itself a portrait, must needs prejudice the unity of the composition considered as a complete picture. 'He (Copley) was a great painter among the English artists of his day, and is not to be judged by the present standard; being in a manner self-taught, he achieved much more than many who have received an academical instruction.' Thus Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters* sums up Copley's position as an artist. To say less in his favour were unjust, to say more is hardly possible.

Painted in 1779-80, this picture was presented in 1828 to the National Gallery by the Earl of Liverpool.

Two large monochrome studies for the large work are also hung in the National Gallery, Nos. 1072-73.

13. *Death of the Earl of Chatham* (*Copley*).

LORD NELSON

IN THE VICTORY'S COCKPIT, MORTALLY WOUNDED, OCTOBER 21, 1805

By Benjamin West, P.R.A.

IT is perhaps somewhat uncourteous to accompany a picture with an apology; yet the presence here of Benjamin West's 'Lord Nelson' is not wholly due to its importance as a work of art. A President of the Royal Academy is not necessarily the best British painter of the time that coincided with his election. Social fitness and many lay virtues are factors in the choice. Certain paintings by West once in the National Gallery have been removed to provincial museums; this fact speaks volumes, and renders any further consideration of the painter's rank unnecessary.

But the death of Nelson is a subject that is sacred to every Briton. If the representation be inadequate he forgets all else but the theme itself. Despite his shortcomings, West tried to promote realism in art. It is said that he went to the ship itself to paint this scene, and a grim story is told of the hero's body being replaced for a while in the cockpit to serve as a model for the artist. Whether this be legend or fact need not concern us. The picture is one of the national treasures, and, if ten times less worthy as a painting than it is, would yet retain no little interest. For a picture that satisfies the unlettered should not be regarded with half the scorn that is provoked by some pretentious attempt which fails to deserve sympathy either popular or esoteric.

West lived before the days of illustrated journalism, and doubtless his picture served the purpose of bringing the incident to the gaze of those whose imagination failed to conjure up the scene for themselves. Therefore for his place in the record of British art, and for the themes he chose, one may respect his memory and yet recognise clearly that his presence among great painters is the result of accident rather than of intrinsic merit.

The painting, in poor condition (as the reproduction here shows only too faithfully), hangs in the Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital, and is given here by permission of the Admiralty.

14. *Nelson Mortally Wounded* (*West*).

THE THREE WITCHES

By H. Fuseli, R.A.

WHILE it would be easy to overrate Fuseli's importance, it is but fair to see in his works the first notable examples of a melodramatic use of the grotesque, which found perhaps in Gustave Doré its most complete expression. Although neither of the two can be ranked among the great painters of the world, yet in each there is a certain extravagance of fancy peculiarly effective in rousing the enthusiasm of the populace.

Fuseli's famous picture of 'The Nightmare' is perhaps the most typical instance of the half-horrible grotesque which attracted him chiefly. In the 'Three Witches' and in many of his illustrations to Shakespeare, there is a distinct attempt to emphasise the commonplace tragedy of the incident. But unluckily both in drawing and colour his technique was often inadequate to express his grandiose imaginings. In some respects we might draw a parallel between his art and that of Edgar Allan Poe, but only roughly. For the author of *The Raven* had a full grasp of his material, and chose themes better expressed by the less exact method of words than by the direct representations in painting. For the unseen is always the most terrifying, and Fuseli, like the mediæval artists who depicted devils and imps, weakens the terror he would inspire by showing his bogies to be mere physical monsters.

Hence probably this, 'The Three Witches,' a really strong piece, may be selected as a type of the artist at his best. It is strange that he never seems to have gained great popularity by these 'exceedingly thoughtful and imaginative works,' as they have been called by a recent critic who traces them to a study of Klopstock and Lavater. All the same, as a bold attempt to break away from tradition, and as one of the founders of the school which both in art and literature still keeps a hold on Anglo-Saxon races, Fuseli is worthy a place in the rank and file of British artists, even if, in common with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and others, one has to stretch a point to admit that 'Johan Kaspar Fuessly, born in Zurich,' is really entitled to be claimed as an Englishman. Still, born in 1741, he reached England in 1779, and lived here until his death in 1825. In 1790 he was elected a Royal Academician, and that may be regarded artistically as evidence of complete naturalisation.

15. *The Three Witches* (*Fuseli*).

THE MURDER OF THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER

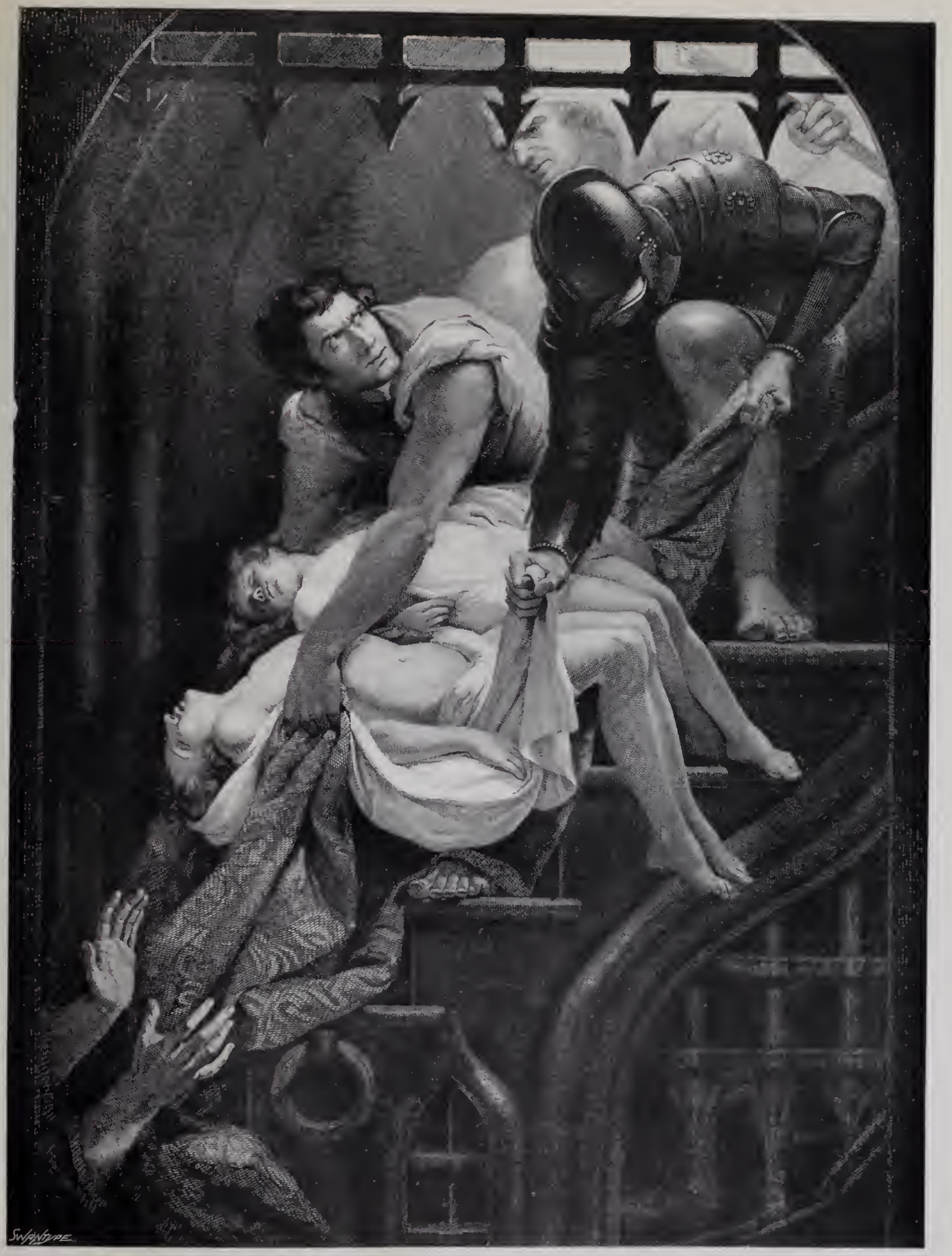
By James Northcote, r.a.

IT cannot be denied that the British school is singularly weak in notable pictures of its own history. The 'Murder of the Princes,' for instance, which by virtue of its subject has won itself no little popularity, is hardly to be found among masterpieces. It is said that after Northcote's journey to Rome in 1777 he never ceased to talk of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian. This is quite likely, for the singularly unrealistic, though by no means unimposing, grouping of this picture owes more to the old Italian painters than to nature. But if Northcote was inspired by the late Renaissance, in this particular picture he is ultra-mediæval. The portcullis is a fine feature in the outer portals of fortified buildings, but one would imagine it was very rarely employed at the side of a staircase. Northcote, however, for pictorial reasons, not merely places it so, but again in an arch underneath the stairs, where no possible space exists for the sliding gate to be drawn up. So the Perpendicular arches, fairly correct in outline, which may belong to the period of his subject, are not, one fancies, to be found in any part of the Tower of London in which the murder could have occurred.

These trifles all go to prove that in spite of the really effective lighting, the imposing figure of a man in armour, and the grouping of the whole work, the painter was more concerned with a certain theatrical presentation of a pathetic incident, than with archæological details, or with probability.

The story itself is of course concerned with the dethroned Edward v., then but a child of twelve, and his brother Richard, Duke of York, who were smothered in the Tower in 1483, their bodies being buried at the foot of the staircase. Richard iii., the supposed author of the deed, as we know, has found champions who acquit him of the crime, yet the matter remains among the unsolved mysteries of history.

The reproduction here is from a mezzotint after the picture.



16. *The Murder of the Princes in the Tower* (*Northcote*).

CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

By THOMAS STOTHARD, R.A.

STOTHARD exhibited only ninety-two pictures at the Academy, but his designs are said to amount to as many as five thousand in number': so runs a sentence in the catalogue of the National Gallery. Therefore, although the accident of size has limited his representation in this work to half a page shared with another painter whose fame is also based on illustrations rather than pictures, no great injustice is done.

This procession is a good example of the panorama in painting; one which should appeal to the picture-lover who delights to study a work bit by bit. Yet although a panorama, it is also a well-grouped composition considered as a whole. Among the figures, to quote again from the catalogue, 'may be recognised "the Knight and his Son, the "yonge Squier' with his 'yeman cladde in cote and hode of green," the "Prioress with her Chappeleine and Priestes three," the Mark and the "mery Frere," the "Marchant with a forked beard," and "on his hed a Flaundrish bever hat," the "Clerke of Oxenforde," the "Sergeant of the Lawe," the "Frankelein," the "Haberdasher," "Carpenter," "Webbe," "Deyer," and "Tapisier," the "Coke" and "Shipman," the "Doctour of Phisike," and the "good Wif of Bathe," the "poore Personne," the "stout Miller," the "gentil Manciple," the "Sompnour that hadde a fire-red cherubinne's face," and the "Pardonere"; all enumerated and described in the Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.*

This painting on a panel is in the National Gallery, for which it was purchased from the Leigh Court Collection in 1884. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

By William Blake

CONTRASTING these two versions of the same theme here placed together, it has been well said that Stothard's grace is over facile, just as Blake's dignified scheme of figures is over formal. Stothard's work comforts the eye if it does not satisfy an admirer of Chaucer. Blake's neither comforts nor satisfies anybody, but it compels respect and admiration, and gives a high enjoyment and a trifling disquietude at the same time.

It was shown at an exhibition of water-colours by the artist in 1809, and the catalogue contains a long description, which Charles Lamb considered the finest essay on Chaucer he had ever read. Unluckily, it is far too long to quote here: those who are curious will find it reproduced in full in the excellent edition of *Blake's Works* by Mr. Edwin John Ellis and Mr. W. B. Yeats (Quaritch, 1893). The closing passage of this essay, which was written by Blake himself, contains so personal a reference to the other picture which here forms its companion, that it were best to quote it. It runs: 'The scene of Mr. S[tothard]'s picture is by Dulwich Hills, which was not the way to Canterbury; but perhaps the painter thought he would give them a ride round about, because they were a burlesque set of scarecrows, not worth any man's respect or care. But the painter's thoughts being always upon gold, he has introduced a character that Chaucer did not, namely, a goldsmith. . . . All is misconceived, and its misexecution is equal to its misconception.'

The painting is rather more than three feet in length by one in height. 'To place figures well in a long strip of this kind is a severe test of that sensitiveness to processional cadence in grouping which is one of the rarest qualities of an artist'; and here Blake, in formal competition with an Academician of his day, may be estimated fairly, and the result left to unbiased criticism, if indeed there be any who are not definitely prejudiced on the matter of the art of William Blake.

17. *Canterbury Pilgrims* (*Stothard*).

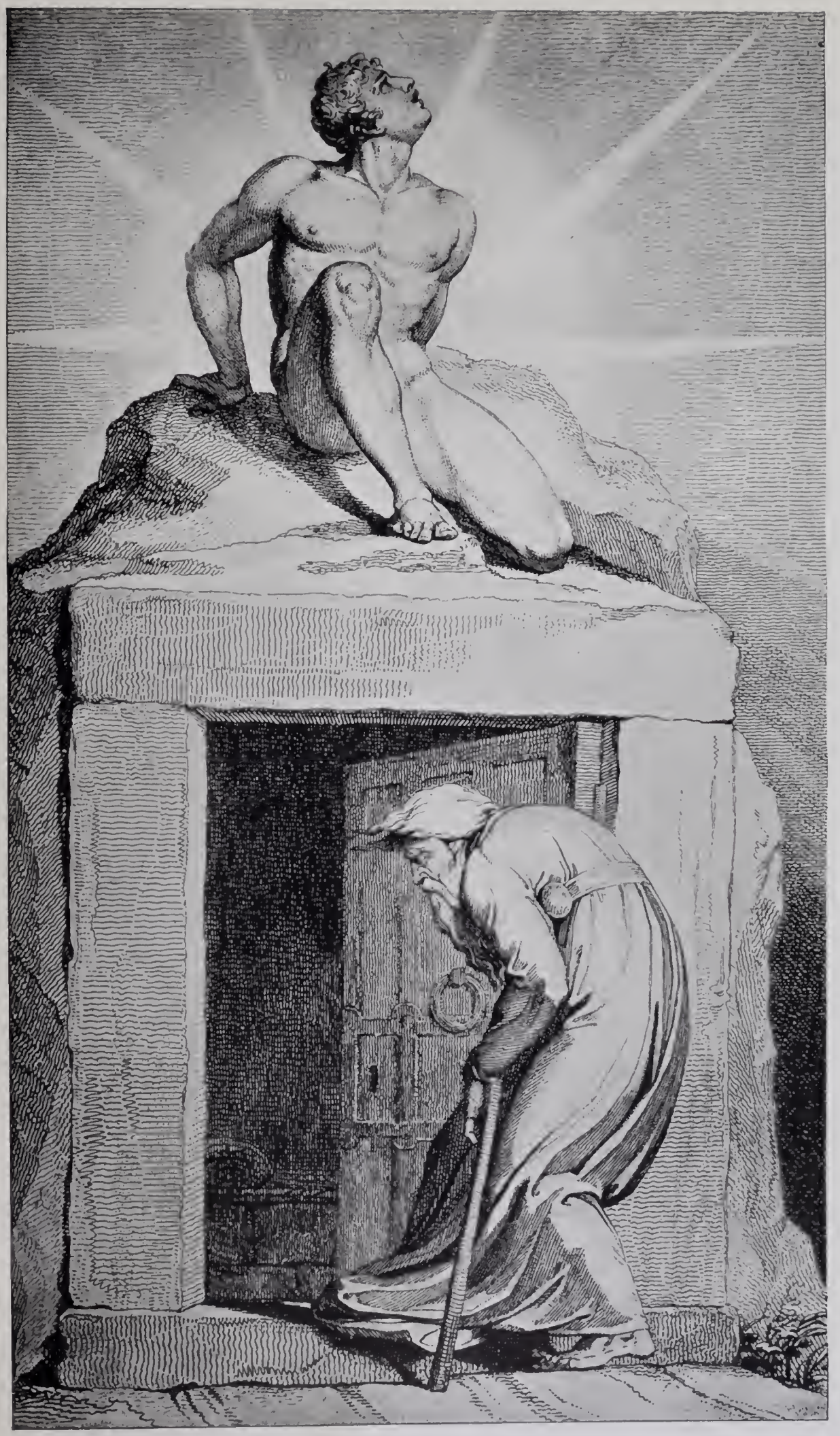
17A. *Canterbury Pilgrims* (*Blake*).

DEATH'S DOOR

By William Blake

IT is peculiarly difficult to estimate Blake's true position as an artist; for, while his enemies call him a madman, his friends rank him as the greatest visionary artist England has produced. Undoubtedly his influence is being felt to-day, and even the jealously guarded portals of the National Gallery admit two of his fantastic conceptions. The picture here reproduced is one of a series illustrating Blair's *Grave*. 'It shows a rocky mausoleum. The heavy door is open, and an old man on crutches totters in as though seeking his own tomb. Just above the little mortuary hermitage, on the unhewn rocky roof of the sepulchre, a naked youth is rising up as though the light that surrounds his body were the dawn of the last day. He is recognised as the soul of the old man, and the two parts of the design are not considered as belonging to the action of one moment, but the upper portion as showing a later chapter of the story pictured in the lower.' So runs the description in Messrs. Ellis and Yeats' memoir.

The designs, twelve in number, were executed in 1805. This is decidedly the most popular, but others—notably the deaths of the Good Old Man and the Strong Wicked Man, and of the Soul exploring the recesses of the Grave—are more deeply infused with the mystic symbolism which has earned for Blake the title of the Swedenborg of art. It may be straining the purpose of this book—which is confined to painters in oil chiefly—to include a water-colour drawing, which owes little to aught but line, among veritable paintings. But Blake is a distinct force in British art, and whether you condemn or approve his methods, it is impossible to deny the vigour of his conceptions, and at times his strong sense of decoration and impressive composition. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.



18. *Death's Door* (*Blake*).

BOY WITH A RABBIT

By Sir Henry Raeburn

IN a somewhat depressing suite of rooms at Burlington House, known as the Diploma and Gibson Galleries, wherein are hung the pictures officially presented to the Royal Academy by each newly created R.A., within six months of his election, it is with real pleasure that your eye lights upon this dainty canvas. Around it are pictures blackened by time, with a spurious resemblance to Old Masters; pictures which were never related intimately to nature, and owed more to artifice than art. But in this charming study of child-life you find a painting which is worthy to be placed by a Reynolds, if indeed it has not a certain truthfulness of its own, from the entire absence of the grand manner, which makes it even still more lovable.

The fame of Sir Henry Raeburn, who was created on George the Fourth's visit to Scotland 'His Majesty's limner in that part of his dominions, with all the rights, privileges, and advantages thereunto belonging,' rests chiefly upon his superb series of portraits. But this rare example of *genre* proves that he could have sustained his high reputation by works of another character had he chosen. It is always a red-letter day to be remembered when you first come across a fine series of Raeburns, and the pleasure only increases your surprise that an artist of such power had not earlier found the favour which at length he is sharing with Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Hoppner, as a British portrait-painter of the first rank.

One among many qualities that mark out the master is that the costume he employs never strikes you as grotesque, no matter how it may conflict with the fashions of the hour. That this is due to the artist himself is easily discoverable by reference to any commonplace engraving from his work. It is this factor which in reproduction has vulgarised many of the exquisite child-portraits of Reynolds, so one may be thankful that this delightful Raeburn has escaped the fatal popularity of harsh engravings on steel or wood, and can appeal now in the more mechanical medium of photo-process work, without any memories of ugly prints in old magazines intervening.

The painting is the Diploma picture by Raeburn, who was elected a Royal Academician in 1814, and is included here by permission of the Academy.

19. *Boy with a Rabbit* (*Raeburn*).

STIRLING CASTLE

By Alexander Nasmyth

THIS finely ordered landscape deserves a place in any representative collection, as indeed its presence in our National Gallery would imply; especially when, as in this case, it is found to be a picture purchased by the Trustees. Possibly the work of Nasmyth is often more interesting considered as a foundation of a school rather than for its own sake; but this particular instance needs no extraneous reason to entitle it to praise.

The scene is not quite an accurate topographical record. The exigencies of composition have played some havoc with the place as photography would record it. In the painting we see the castle on an eminence to the right, and on the left a wide valley through which a river winds, with hills in the distance; goats are introduced amid the herbage of the foreground. It is true that the picture is not so much nature as an untrained artist would see it, as nature seen through the memories of old masters. In the late eighteenth century a painter who had studied in Rome, and returned to the modern Athens—Edinburgh—could hardly hope to escape a certain classic influence. But while staunch obedience to classic models usually results in mere pedantry, it is not always a matter for regret that a capable painter, who is not quite a heaven-born genius, should rely somewhat on well-founded precedent.

The artistic impulse of the Nasmyth family begins here, with Alexander; but his son Peter, who called himself Patrick, carried on the tradition to still nobler ends, so that the 'English Holbein' became his nickname. The famous inventor of the steam-hammer was another son of the painter of 'Stirling Castle.' This fact is not even remotely connected with painting; but the student of lunar landscape and the draughtsman who could project a thing so complex as the steam-hammer from his imagination, so that his first rough sketch supplied a working drawing for its construction to a stranger who saw it by chance, was also a clever amateur artist. Therefore for its associations 'Stirling Castle' might be respected were it an infinitely less fine work than it really is.

The 'absurd and famous portrait of Burns' by Alexander Nasmyth must not be omitted from the family chronicle, nor the fact that there were other members who became popular as picture painters. But the directory of artists to-day shows no trace of any survivors, and therefore we may properly rank *the Nasmyth family school* as a past force, in more senses than one.

20. *Stirling Castle* (*Nasmyth*).

THE INSIDE OF A STABLE

By George Morland

THIS well-known picture has a particularly definite pedigree. Painted when Morland was twenty-eight years old, it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1791, where it found a purchaser in the Rev. Sir Henry Bate Dudley, Bart., from whom it descended to his nephew, Mr. Thomas Bulle Wolfe, who presented it to the National Gallery.

'In all the range of British art, there are few things better than a good Morland,' says Mr. Henley, and this, if not Morland's best, is at least one of his best. In the Life of the painter, by George Dane, R.A., the subject is said to represent the White Lion, Paddington, opposite the painter's home at the time, which was his favourite haunt, and for one whose manners were, to say the least, extremely unconventional, a haunt perhaps too alluring. It is far more interesting from the fact that it is the first painting of a stable interior—a subject he repeated so often—which Morland attempted. Speaking of these stable pictures, an earlier critic calls attention 'to the assemblage of objects always appropriate and disposed as if by accident,' and claims this careless distribution as his forte. Each person, of course, is quite justified in claiming some particular quality as his hero's strong point, but, without being over-appreciative, Morland deserves credit for something greater than 'careless distribution.' He was first and foremost a painter—that is to say, he did not set out to teach a lesson by means of a pictured parable. He saw certain beautiful effects in ordinary life, and expressed them in his own medium, which happened to be paint. He was a fine colourist, and knowing exactly what he intended to accomplish, did it so directly that he preserved that spontaneity which is a peculiar virtue in a work of art. Whether the dogma of the joy of the workman in his work be wholly sound or not, there can be no doubt that fine craftsmanship, which has the air of being unlaboured, is far more likely to attract generation after generation than any *tour de force* which betrays too obviously the immense pains of its making.

Because Morland painted pigs and stables he has been called coarse and vulgar; and because he painted them broadly, with no Dutch minuteness of detail, he has still offended further a great class of critics who think the only excuse for depicting common objects is that they should be life-size, and imitative to the last degree. Morland was concerned with the whole more than with its parts, hence to-day he rises higher and higher into favour with those whose taste is based on knowledge.

The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

22. *Inside of a Stable* (*Morland*).

DOOR OF A VILLAGE INN

By George Morland

PERHAPS it would be more in accordance with the popular estimate of Morland to have given one of his many pictures of pigs for the second example of his work. But in black-and-white they would probably lose the most of the qualities which make them great. If English connoisseurs prefer his pigs, many continental critics prefer his little social scenes, and say that only with the greatest master of technique among the Flemish group, Adrian Brouwer, can these pieces by Morland be compared for *verve* and artistic many-sidedness.

Morland seems to have been a typical Merry-Englishman of the free and easy sort, with a taste for the society of his inferiors (he was the heir to a baronetcy) and a hatred of all social restraint, if not of common decency. Yet the man who could carouse in public-houses could also paint the exquisitely refined group 'The Tea-Garden' (exhibited at Burlington House, 1886) with a courtesy and suave grace that recalls some fashionable painter who lived in the polite society he painted. This curious admixture of the bucolic man and the refined artist is not without parallel; but it never fails to surprise and vex a school of critics whose very existence is perhaps largely due to Mr. Ruskin, who will compare the ethics of morality with painting. The motto 'Art for art's sake' is degraded by too many charlatans, and it is one that most possibly the easy, careless Morland would have disdained. Yet, however loosely he took the duties of a British tax-payer, he never shirked those of his art, and for this much may be forgiven. His life was full of wild adventure and orgies none too reputable: his pictures are free from vulgarity of subject or treatment. For Morland found beauty in the common tasks of every-day life, not wilfully chosen to represent it in morbid hue, but 'with all the chivalrous grace of the time of Werther, and that fine Anglo-Saxon aroma escaping from works of English painters of the present day.'[1]

The picture is in the National Gallery, to which it was bequeathed in 1892 by Sir Oscar M. P. Clayton, C.B. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

[1] Muther, vol. ii. pp. 99 and 100.

23. *Door of a Village Inn* (*Morland*).

ADMIRAL DUNCAN

11TH OCTOBER 1797

By Samuel Drummond, A.R.A.

THE full title of this painting is 'Admiral Duncan receiving the sword of the Dutch Admiral De Winter on the quarter-deck of the *Venerable*, 11th October 1797.' 'The scene represented occurred at the battle of Camperdown, in which action eleven Dutch ships were taken. The third figure in the group is the Captain of the *Venerable*, afterwards Admiral Sir William George Fairfax.' So runs the official description, and it seems to need no further comment.

The picture is a fair specimen of the average naval painting. It is always a matter of surprise that the great deeds of English sailors have so rarely inspired artists of the first rank. It is possible that were a list made of all naval subjects which ever attracted British painters, they would form but an insignificant item in the total of British pictures. Domestic trivialities, scenes from the Bible or from Shakespeare, almost every well-defined class of political history and *genre* would bulk largely above those from naval or military subjects. Therefore to represent this aspect of our national art at all, you are compelled to include paintings that on their own merit belong to the great army of second-rate, or, at best, mildly academic works. The Painted Hall at Greenwich is full of canvases that are of immense interest to any one except a painter, whom they inspire with profound regret as he recognises the wasted opportunities which the old and picturesque battles presented. No doubt it is traceable to a belief—still held by many good Britons—that the contemporary costume of the period is always undignified, and that *art* requires the assistance of a theatrical *costumier* and a stage property man before she can depict heroes or any actors in history. Absurd as the conclusion is, we can find no other to account for the neglect of contemporary history in British art.

This picture was presented to the Greenwich Hospital by the British Institution, and is reproduced here by permission of the Admiralty.

24. *Admiral Duncan* (*Drummond*).

,,

THE SAN NICHOLAS AND SAN JOSEF

CARRIED BY BOARDING, FEB. 14, 1797

By Richard Westall, R.A.

ON St. Valentine's Day, exactly one hundred years ago, the incident occurred here depicted by Westall. A large picture by Orme, devoted to the same subject, painted 'under the direction of Lord Nelson and the officers of H.M.S. *Captain*, his flag-ship,' is also at Greenwich. But this version by Westall must needs take higher rank as a painting, although it would be overpraise to declare that for its intrinsic merits it deserves a place in a National Collection. Westall was perhaps at his best when illustrating popular editions of the classics of English literature. In addition to his contributions to the famous Shakespeare Gallery, he designed a series of plates for Milton, both commissioned by Alderman Boydell, a munificent patron of the arts. In these a certain prettiness is not always fatal; but in his paintings there is too much elegance in the pose of the figures, as, for example, in the officer with averted face and uplifted arm to the right of this picture. This was in accord with the mood of his time, and, had his technique and colour been finer, the artificiality of his compositions would not have sufficed to have debarred him from a higher rank among painters than he is awarded.

The story of the incident is best related in Nelson's own words:—'On the quarter-deck of a Spanish first-rate, extravagant as the story may seem, did I receive the swords of the vanquished Spaniards, which, as I received, I gave to William Fearney, one of my bargemen, who put them, with the greatest *sang-froid*, under his arm—"bundling them up," as the gallant Collingwood expressed it, "with as much composure as he would have made a fagot, though twenty-two sail of the Spanish line were still within gun-shot." The Commodore was supported, as he has described, by "old Agamemnons" and "several other brave men, seamen, and soldiers." Thus fell these ships. In boarding the *San Nicholas*, I believe we lost about seven killed and ten wounded, and about twenty Spaniards lost their lives by a foolish resistance; none were, I believe, lost in boarding the *San Josef*. There is a saying in the fleet too flattering for me to omit telling, viz., "Nelson's patent bridge for boarding first-rates," alluding to my passage over an enemy's eighty-gun ship. This occurred February 14th, 1797.'

The picture is reproduced here by permission of the Admiralty.

25. *Carried by Boarding (Westall).*

THE WINDMILL

By John Crome

THE full title of this picture by 'Old Crome' runs: 'The Windmill, on an undulating heath, probably Mousehold Heath in the neighbourhood of Norwich,' a roundabout way of describing a painting that is singularly straightforward in its simple statement of truth. 'Old Crome,' as he is always called, and the nickname suggests much, was not only a great landscape painter, but, as an early biographer described him, 'the founder of the only local school in England of any importance.' It is but fair to add that this statement was put forth before the world had heard of the Newlyn School, or the Glasgow School, and possibly without thought of the pre-Raphaelite School—three exceptions which suffice to show that the phrase can hardly pass without protest. But, all the same, the Norwich School is a great fact, and signs are plentiful at present which point to a still further recognition of its importance.

The pictures by this master, we read, never fetched over fifty pounds each during his lifetime, and only twelve of his works enjoyed the honour of being exhibited at the Royal Academy, between 1807 and 1818. It would be amusing to dissect the catalogues of these eleven years, and see how many of the members' works would elicit equal praise from modern critics, or fetch similar prices under the hammer. The result of such inquiry would probably be a hopeful augury to 'outsiders' to-day. Now 'Old Crome' is an established master. 'Inspired mainly by nature, he excelled all previous artists in his character of trees.' This is but one of many aspects that have won him approval. This very picture, dated about 1816, was painted, as he himself said, 'for the sake of air and space.' That he brought these into his canvas is evident; he was one of the rebels to whom art owes a debt too deep for payment.

The National Gallery purchased this picture at the International Exhibition of 1862 from Mr. William Yetts of Great Yarmouth. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

26. *The Windmill* (*Crome*).

NATURE

By Sir Thomas Lawrence, p.r.a.

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE, it is said, declared this to be one of the few pictures by which he wished to be represented to posterity. Greeted from the moment it was painted with rapturous applause, it has kept its position. Indeed the amount of anecdote and eulogistic notices devoted to it would fill many pages of this book.

The painting, as a portrait of the children of C. B. Calmady, Esq., was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1824. In Williams' *Life of Sir Thomas Lawrence*, certain incidents of the sittings, told by their mother, are printed at some length ; these show the painter in a genial aspect. Indeed, the record is ultra-domestic, and speaks not only of 'Laura's glowing and rosy fairness, if one may call it so, and Emmy's entirely different and pearl-like tints,' but of Lawrence feeding one of the babes with mutton chops and mashed potatoes just before a letter arrived with the announcement (in French) of his being made an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Denmark. 'They must have heard I was painting this picture,' was the painter's comment after perusing the official document. All this pleasant gossip gives to the masterpiece the air of a spontaneous effort undertaken in sheer love of the grace of the children, with whom he was on most intimate and affectionate terms. Unluckily it has not been found practicable to give a reproduction from the original painting, and a certain 'prettiness' which belongs to the engraving reproduced here must not be imputed to the intention of the painter himself but to the engraver. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

27. *Nature* (*Lawrence*).

A CHILD WITH A KID

By Sir Thomas Lawrence, p.r.a.

THIS very popular picture is inscribed 'Lady Giorgiana Fane, 1800: aet. 5.' It is an excellent sample of the romantic portrait, with the artificially-natural treatment that was in vogue at the period of its production. It is not likely that an earl's daughter was in the habit of taking linen to be washed in a stream, or disport herself in old-master-like undress, amid conventionally grandiose landscape. But dismissing the trifling accidents of the little comedy, the figure is a real child, with no little of that exquisite grace which Reynolds, Lawrence's predecessor, had bestowed on English children. Despite a slightly histrionic pose, and a slightly artificial intensity in the rapt poetic gaze of the little Lady Giorgiana, it is not merely a lay figure prettily disposed in lines that harmonise with the scheme of the composition, but a real child, who in a second might start into mischievous activity. This is evident, even if you study the composition as it appears in reproduction here, and forget artifice entirely. The kid, which helps to entitle the picture, may not be a masterly rendering of animal life; but one must not forget its main purpose is to fill an empty corner, just as the pitcher to the left is the near relative of the 'pot with a lily,' an equally convenient property for earlier and later painters.

But if the obvious convention of the picture is mildly amusing, the real beauty of the child—not merely its head, but the true and tenderly expressed movement of the feet and hands—is impressed with a certain distinction that is absent from many an equally ambitious modern attempt. To appreciate its worth, one has only to recall the average 'baby and puppy,' or the much befrocked and behatted juvenile nobles of a few years ago, to realise how very far removed is this portrait, whatever may be its rank among masterpieces, from the 'kiss-mammy' type that floods the Academy year after year now.

The picture was bequeathed to the National Gallery by Lady Giorgiana Fane in 1875.

28. *Child with a Kid* (*Lawrence*).

THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE

By J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

Of all Turner's paintings none has grasped the hearts of the British more than this. The subject symbolises in a way the death of a hero at that moment which certain painters of landscape love to entitle, 'At eventide there shall be light!' But the emotional qualities here are noble enough, and there is no sentimentality in the conception or execution of the work. The steamboat typifies the newborn generation as surely as the old three-decker the fighting hero who has fought his last fight; and so far from lachrymose regret for a dead hero, it is the dawn of a new epoch that the picture foreshadows. It should never be forgotten that Turner, idealist as he was, painted the steam-engine and the steamboat when they were as vulgar in their novelty as a motor-car or bicycle would appear to many an artist to-day. It is true that he gave poetic rather than realistic versions of the new factors that have affected so great a change in social amenities; but he introduced them boldly into serious works.

The *Téméraire* was an old 'ninety-eight,' named after a French prize, and took part in the battle of Trafalgar as second ship in Lord Nelson's division. She was towed to Rotherhithe to be broken up in 1838.

Although the interest of the average admirer of this picture may be awakened chiefly by the incident of its subject, it is as a study of clouds at sunset that a painter prizes it most. The colour of the blood-red sun, and the white mists on the water, through which the ship looms ghostlike, are full of tender beauty. The reproduction here given has caught much of the effect of the modelling in the clouds and the composition of the picture, but it has also imparted a certain sense of gloom not apparent in the original. Indeed, one who had not seen it might be tempted to think it was the ordinary yellow brown of an 'old master,' instead of being a delicate harmony more akin to a nocturne by Mr. Whistler. It is given but to few works of art to please all parties, and in this respect the 'Fighting *Téméraire*' is almost unique. 'His entire power is best represented by such pictures as the *Téméraire*,' said Mr. Ruskin. Go when you will to the National Gallery, you will always find No. 524 to be one of the few Turners which tempt the careless visitor to linger. It was among the hundred finished oil-paintings which, with seven thousand water-colour drawings, were bequeathed to the nation by the painter himself in 1856.

29. *The Fighting Téméraire* (*Turner*).

THE DUCAL PALACE

By J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

THE formal title of this painting runs—Venice, 'the Dogana, Campanile of San Marco, Ducal Palace, Bridge of Sighs, etc., Canaletti painting,' and that title is supplemented in the catalogue by this quotation from Rogers's *Italy* :—

> 'There is a glorious city in the sea—
> The sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
> Ebbing and flowing; and the salt seaweed
> Clings to the marble of her palaces.'

It is a fine specimen of the painter's third period, when 'light with all its prismatic varieties seemed to have engrossed his attention.' Possibly as two other sea-pieces are given here, one of his mythological subjects would have represented Turner more adequately; but this picture of Venice is better suited for monochrome reproduction than are most of his compositions in the grand manner, which suffer greatly by reduction, and are apt to be burlesqued in black-and-white. An attempt to eulogise Turner anew would be foredoomed failure; the danger is rather to-day that Mr. Ruskin's elaborate and reiterated panegyrics may probably provoke a reaction and cause some injustice to be done to the memory of a great artist. That some of the best qualified critics, on the Continent especially, are disinclined to accept Mr. Ruskin's estimate as final need not imply that Turner is less than a master. But it may be that more sober appreciation will praise him not as 'the greatest colourist, the greatest landscapist of England, the man who absorbed all the best teaching of previous masters and surpassed them,' but as a painter who was more truly the last of the classical school than the forerunner of the newer, and, as we believe, truer landscape which Constable began and Corot continued. Be this as it may, England has good cause to be proud of Turner, who, illiterate and eccentric to the point of madness in later years, bewitched a singularly fascinating writer, who in turn enlisted the sympathy of artistic England in favour of his hero.

This painting, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1833, forms one of the Vernon Collection presented to the National Gallery in 1847. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

30. *The Ducal Palace, Venice* (*Turner*).

THE BATTLE OFF CAPE TRAFALGAR

21 OCTOBER 1805

By J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

IN the Painted Hall, Greenwich, almost our only collection of English pictures devoted to warlike themes, this Turner is a triton among minnows. The subject represents 'the great battle in which the British fleet of twenty-seven sail of the line and four frigates completely defeated the combined French and Spanish fleets, consisting of thirty-three ships of the line and five frigates. The *Victory*, the principal ship represented in this picture, bore the flag of Lord Nelson. On her quarter-deck he fell mortally wounded by a musket-ball supposed to have been fired from the mizzen-top of the *Redoutable*, with which ship she was closely engaged.'

The scene, allowing much for a painter's licence, brings to a spectator the personal element in warfare, which modern conditions have eliminated. Ships now engage at long distances, so that ironclads seem less vessels with guns and fighting men on board, than almost automatic weapons controlled and guided by comparatively few skilled craftsmen. It is a curious sign of the classic tradition which still fettered Turner, that in the foreground a group of men, quite opposed to realistic truth, should engage attention before the real incident, the death-grapple of the two ships, catches the eye. Snapshot-photographs and greater attention to things as they are, have given modern painters and modern audiences quite different ideas. To us, a tossing sea destitute of wreckage and drowning men would seem more fitting to be the setting of such an incident. But in the painting the splendour of the colour and the complex lines of the composition unite to produce an epic rather than a special correspondent's report. One does not criticise it as a record of the actual scene, but as a superb impression of naval warfare imagined by a painter of whom Mr. Ruskin said, speaking of his boyhood:—'And Trafalgar happening long before we could draw ships, we nevertheless coax all current stories out of wounded sailors, do our best to show Nelson's funeral streaming up the Thames; and vow that Trafalgar shall have its tribute of memory some day, which, accordingly, is accomplished—once with all our might for its death; twice with all our might for its victory; thrice in pensive farewell to the old *Téméraire*, and with it, to that order of things.'

The picture, once in St. James's Palace, was presented to Greenwich Hospital in 1829 by his Majesty George IV., and is reproduced by leave of the Admiralty.

31. *Battle of Trafalgar* (*Turner*).

THE HAY-WAIN

By John Constable, R.A.

IT is said that a great German philosopher, taking his son to the British Museum, handed him from the reference shelf a small volume—Darwin's *Origin of Species*—and bade him note it as the greatest thing England had done for the world. A specialist in the arts visiting the National Gallery would doubtless select Constable's 'Hay-Wain' for similar approval; for this work occupies a position as epoch-making in the history of painting as the great theory of Darwin holds in sociology.

Painted in 1821, it was hung with two others from the same hand in the Salon of 1824; and the whole career of French painting was changed immediately. Constable, who died in poverty in England, had discovered that there was 'room enough for a natural painter.' Yet the first man who dared to accept the common aspect of the everyday world as all-sufficient was overlooked here until he had appealed with irresistible force to Paris—that Paris of advanced thought and of ripe knowledge, where ancient art was profoundly respected and yet artists were capable of receiving new impulses even from the unexpected direction of Great Britain.

It fired certain of the younger men, and the great Barbizon school—which rose into being with Romanticism for its keynote—dates from this motive power. Corot and Jean François Millet, Courbet, Diaz, Daubigny, and Rousseau are lineally artistic descendants of the Hampstead artist. To him the Dutch school of landscape owes fealty. Indeed, it would not be claiming too much to assert that even the impressionists Monet, Sisley, and the rest, and many a modern school less obviously founded on Constable, owe their very existence to his revolt.

This famous picture (with two others) brought the painter £250. Twenty, possibly forty, times that sum would scarce purchase it were it put to auction to-day. But money value is of secondary importance in art; the intrinsic worth of the picture lies in the fact that it opened men's eyes to the visible beauty of their own world; not a world artificially made elegant by landscape gardening and studio light, but the 'style of God Almighty,' the promised land which Gainsborough saw from a distance, and Constable entered into fully.

The painting was shown at Burlington House, for the first time apparently, in 1885-86 (the original study for it, owned by Lord Leighton, was sold at Christie's in 1896). It is now in the National Gallery (No. 1207), to which it was presented in 1886 by Mr. Henry Vaughan. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

32. *The Hay-Wain* (*Constable*).

FLATFORD MILL
ON THE RIVER STOUR

By John Constable, R.A.

PAINTINGS by Constable do not afford much scope for comment in words. Face to face with nature, the artist set down his own interpretation of the beauty he saw. To attempt a description of this picture would be merely to re-describe its scene, to try to convey in a less precise medium the colour, light, and movement he has fixed with irresistible truth upon the canvas.

In the official catalogue of the National Gallery we are told, 'On the left of the foreground a draught-horse, bestridden by a boy, stands on the towing-path, while a man adjusts a rope by which it is attached to a barge floating on the river, under the guidance of bargemen. On the right is an old dilapidated oak-tree, round the trunk of which a streamlet winds its way between sedgy banks. In the middle distance the river is intersected by a lock, surrounded by trees and farm buildings. Above, a sunny sky, across which large clouds are drifting.' As a means of identification, this notice leaves nothing to be desired; but how incapable it would be of conveying a mental impression of the picture to a stranger is evident if you study the illustration here. The pastoral character of the scene shows its painter's contempt for classical composition that could scarce be discovered from the official description quoted. For here is a bit of nature, careless of pyramidical masses, a stretch of landscape that, if cut in two, would leave two pictures each complete in itself—pictorially speaking. To understand, at this date, the strength of Constable's revolt against tradition, one has but to imagine how this scene would have been manipulated by earlier landscape painters. All its details would have been re-arranged to comply with a preconceived theory, and the straggling landscape, with several distinct centres of interest, would have been artificially lighted and grouped so that the canons of convention were respected. The picture, as it is, is just a finely selected piece of real English scenery, and full of the light of day; an out-of-doors feeling is everywhere. The hat in the foreground, and the wooden fencing of the stream, are the only items that suggest artifice. The rest, so far as composition is concerned, might be found in a snapshot photograph.

The painting was bequeathed to the National Gallery in 1888 by Miss Isabel Constable.

33. *Flatford Mill* (*Constable*).

THE CORNFIELD OR COUNTRY LANE

By John Constable, r.a.

IN this painting there is a more deliberate unity of selection than in many of Constable's. It is probable that the scene depicted is exactly as the painter saw it; but all the same its parts fall more or less into the 'composition' dear to the landscape painters of earlier date. Except the broken fencing in the foreground, which, like that in 'Flatford Mill on the Stour,' is less reminiscent of nature than of the foreground studies of the drawing-master, the painting is unvexed by any stage properties. That it has caught the very spirit of an English lane in summer-time is too obvious a criticism to need repetition. Even as here given in black-and-white, the sounds and the odour of the moment depicted seem suggested no less vividly than its colour and atmosphere.

The painting is perhaps the first of a class of landscapes which at one time bid fair to expel all others from popular approval. We see in it the inspiration of the Birket Foster School, and perhaps a slight tendency to the 'prettiness' of much mid-Victorian landscape, which at length became merely inane. But in its own way this painting appeals with a direct purpose that no triumphs of modern landscape can do more than rival. Perhaps a certain 'picturesque' tree to the right was a concession to formal beauty, or possibly it was actually there. In either case one may wish it away with no disrespect to a mighty master. For Constable is not a painter to be 'appreciated,' but to be studied humbly: not merely to be approved as the Briton who upset the French classic school and brought down their lordly temple at a single touch, but as a new force in painting, still vital and still irresistible. The curious thing is that after John Constable's revelations English painters could sink back into the platitudes of Academic landscape; yet from his time until the mid-Victorian period Constable was isolated. Now again we have returned to his legend, and the legitimate heirs to his title are raising English landscape to the position he conquered for it. For we must not forget that in landscape, and almost only in landscape, can Britons claim the right to a foremost place among the arts.

The picture, painted in 1826, was presented in 1837 to the National Gallery by a group of admirers who purchased it from Constable's executors. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

34. *The Cornfield* (*Constable*).

GREENWICH

By Sir Augustus W. Callcott, R.A.

OF all paintings that lose from reproduction by the ordinary processes, perhaps sea-scapes—where the real interest of the subject lies in long stretches of water and open sky above—suffer most. Yet to omit Callcott from a representative collection would be unfair, and this picture of 'Greenwich,' despite its having naturally lost its colour, yet affords a fair example of the painter. Although he appears to have been influenced but slightly by Claude Lorraine, he has not escaped the honour of being called 'the English Claude' —a somewhat doubtful compliment at its best—which becomes absurd when you discover that a dozen or more of British landscape-painters have been so nicknamed by their too zealous admirers.

In the simple directness of his work there is much of lasting value; but although here represented by a marine landscape—(if the bull may be pardoned) —he is perhaps better known to the general public by his 'Raphael and the Fornarina,' which was engraved by Lumb Stocks, R.A., and given to the subscribers of the London Art Union in 1843. A picture of 'Milton and his Daughters,' exhibited in 1840, has also become widely known. Yet collectors are more inclined to favour him as a landscape and marine painter; and in these branches he certainly produced more vital work.

The 'Greenwich' hangs in Sir John Soane's Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, whence, by courtesy of the trustees, the present reproduction has been made. The illustration here given is from the reproduction published by the Autotype Company, London, W.C.

35. *Greenwich* (*Callcott*).

A GALIOT IN A GALE

By John Sell Cotman

THE art of Cotman does not lend itself to reproduction by ordinary process; and if one of his still more representative works had been selected in place of this, it would have seemed singularly ineffective. Were it not for the voucher of authenticity which a place in our National Gallery gives it, one might even doubt if this were a veritable Cotman. Yet it has much of the large handling which seems to bring the tossing sea into the frame, and is not an isolated specimen of the painter's power in marine subjects.

Side by side with a reproduction, it seems absurd to call attention to motive or the composition of the picture, nor is it our place here to criticise it. That it is full of vigour and movement is apparent enough, and although it may lack some peculiar qualities, which in his water-colours especially have given John Sell Cotman a lasting place among great artists, yet it is in its way a noble piece of work, and characteristic of the school to which it belongs. Cotman's work is amazing, direct, and simple, without affectation; and without too insistent brusqueness of statement he sets down with unerring instinct the salient points of his subject. Colour, light, atmosphere, movement, each have their due share of attention, which seems settled rather by instinct than by deliberately conscious selection. It is this which keeps his paintings full of pristine youth, and is likely to preserve their author's fame evergreen.

The painting, bought (for something like £2000) at the sale of Mr. James Price's collection, is No. 1458 in the National Gallery.

36. *A Galiot in a Gale* (*Cotman*).

BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT

By Sir William Allan, r.a., p.r.s.a.

COMMODORE NELSON boarding the *San Nicolas* at the battle of St. Vincent, 14th February 1797. So runs the title of this painting by a former President of the Royal Scottish Academy. The incident is 'one of the memorable achievements of Nelson.' 'After engaging the Spanish four-decker *Santissima Trinidad*, Commodore Nelson directed the fire of his ship, the *Captain*, against the *San Nicolas*. This ship ran foul of, and entangled herself with, the *San Josef*. The *Captain* having lost her fore-topmost (*sic*), Nelson, fearing that she would drop astern, ran her into the starboard quarter of the *San Nicolas* and carried that ship by boarding. On her surrender Nelson pushed forward and led the boarders over the bulwarks of the *San Josef*, which also quickly surrendered.'

The above extract from the official catalogue of the gallery of Greenwich Hospital, to which the picture was presented by Mr. H. C. Blackburn in 1860, explains clearly enough the theme which Sir W. Allan has portrayed. Indeed, it is difficult to add to it, as the manner of Sir William Allan is not peculiarly personal, and this battle-piece is probably an imaginative effort; for, although the artist travelled in the East, it is extremely improbable that he was eye-witness of this or any naval engagement.

The picture is reproduced by permission of the Commissioners of the Admiralty.

37. *Nelson Boarding the San Nicholas* (*Allan*).

THE SKIRTS OF THE FOREST

By David Cox

ALTHOUGH the painter of 'The Skirts of the Forest' cannot be considered one of Mr. Ruskin's favourite masters of landscape, yet even he fails to be entirely offended with 'the loose and blotted handling of David Cox,' and goes on to say, 'There is no other means by which his object could be attained. The looseness and moisture of his herbage; the rustling, crumpled freshness of his broad-leaved weeds; the play of pleasant light across deep-coloured heather moor or plashing sand; the melting of fragments of white mist into the dropping blue cloud;—all this has not been fully recorded except by him; and what there is of accident in his mode of reaching it answers gracefully to the accidental part of Nature herself.' So generous a tribute must not be forgotten, despite the fact that elsewhere Mr. Ruskin complains not only of Cox but of Constable, and fears the baleful influence of these painters would ultimately influence English landscape as it had then influenced French. His prophecy has come true, and now we rank as heroes beyond praise the men he but half tolerated, and, in doing so, find the Continent echoing our admiration. The sufficiency of Nature with no moral purpose read into her, and no human sentiment, however noble, artificially added to the presentation of her beauties, has become the creed of modern painters. This splendid landscape is one of the masterpieces of David Cox, and by happy accident included among the brave array of his canvases in the Art Gallery of Birmingham, his birthplace.

It was painted for Mr. David Jones for £40, and sold later with 'The Welsh Funeral' for £3300. Mr. Joseph H. Nettlefold bequeathed it to the city of Birmingham, where it now hangs in the City Museum and Art Gallery. It is given here by permission of the Birmingham Corporation.

38. *The Skirts of the Forest* (Cox).

PORCH OF RATISBON CATHEDRAL

By Samuel Prout

THIS is a very typical example of a popular water-colour painter, who has perhaps received a little more than his due share of applause. So typical is it, that even one very familiar with Prout's work might easily mistake it for another porch—Chartres—also from his hand. In both the same point of view is chosen; in both there are artificially disposed groups of peasants; in both the actual architecture looks rather like a 'profile' in a stage scene, and lacks solidity. Its colour is neither a faithful imitation of nature nor a deliberate scheme of beauty in itself.

Yet no record of British painters could ignore a very typical representation of the much-lauded school of British water-colour painters; but, all the same, it is not quite wise to place work of this sort in direct comparison with the masterpieces of *aquarelle* or oils. It fills a worthy chapter in the evolution of the Old British school, and needs neither apology nor covert dispraise; but, at the same time, it were wisest to acknowledge that its merits are rather parochial than cosmopolitan, and that one's regard for it is not wholly uninfluenced by associations wherein art is not absolutely supreme.

The picture is now in South Kensington Museum.

39. *Porch of Ratisbon Cathedral (Prout).*

THE PENNY WEDDING

By Sir David Wilkie, r.a.

THIS picture, painted by Wilkie for the Prince Regent, is a typical masterpiece of the artist's earlier and better period, when he devoted his attention to simple scenes of peasant life, and was only influenced by the old masters in the technique and mechanics of his craft. Later, too much study of the grand school led him on to attempt the historical style, where, even in the *John Knox* which follows, he was not entirely at home. In the *Penny Wedding* we have a great 'little master,' in *Knox* a 'little' would-be great master, a maker of dull canvases that are artificial in conception and execution.

Here, as in *Reading the Will*, *The Rabbit in the Wall*, *Blind Man's Buff*, and many others, the trifling incident supplies him with material for simple compositions set down with direct force of statement. Attracted by the same class of *genre* as the old Dutchmen delighted in, Wilkie, without imitating their minuteness of detail, succeeds in imparting a permanent interest to everyday scenes. His pictures may not elevate the mind, nor arouse æsthetic delight; yet he is able to impart pathos and humour to his groups of peasants, and at the same time to satisfy even the ultra-refined by his transparent simplicity of statement.

The technical problems of modern painting were unknown to him always, but (until he ventured out of his depth) the world he knew he had completely mastered. There is no need to tell in words the story of any one of his early pictures: it is presented clearly for the most careless observer. But although his motives are artless enough, his manner is by no means untrained, and in his best period we have a British master of the first order—a capable and accomplished painter up to the level of his day. To moderns Wilkie appears, if not quite a great draughtsman nor a great colourist, yet all the same, as a typical illustrator, before illustration was a matter of pictures in books, entitled to an honourable and lasting place in the roll of British artists, and one, moreover, which, having withstood successfully severe varying phases of public taste, is likely to remain.

The picture in possession of H.M. the Queen is here reproduced by Her gracious consent.

40. *The Penny Wedding* (*Wilkie*).

THE PREACHING OF KNOX
BEFORE THE LORDS OF THE CONGREGATION, JUNE 10, 1559

By Sir David Wilkie, R.A.

DESPITE its melodramatic grouping, this picture is a fine example of Wilkie's later period after his continental travels. The 'looseness of drawing,' and the painter's 'efforts to attain the richness and depth he admired in the ancient masters,' provoked much censure for this and other paintings from 1825 till his death. It is true that the grandiose style of historical incident which he affects here is far removed from the simplicity of statement which marks 'Blind Man's Buff,' 'Reading the Will,' and most of his early works; yet that it is unlike the early manner should not suffice to condemn it.

The scene depicted is obviously arranged entirely to suit pictorial effect. One doubts if at any period (outside an allegorical representation) people ever disposed themselves all over the place, facing all sorts of ways, merely to make an impressive *ensemble*. But having granted the painter's right to dispose his figures effectively, there is much power in the contrast between the fiery Calvinist and the almost impassive Queen, which is strongly accentuated by the lighting. It is true that for these and other reasons the picture seems more like an exercise in the manner of Veronese or Rubens, than the spontaneous conception of a Scotch artist.

The time is during the regency of Mary of Guise; the place, St. Andrews, Fifeshire. To the right of Knox are Richard Ballenden his amanuensis, with Christopher Goodman his colleague, and Sir James Sandilands. The figure behind, in college cap and gown, is the 'Admirable Crichton.' Below the pulpit is the precentor, Thomas Wood, with his hour-glass; the boy in front of him is John Napier, Baron of Merchiston. On the left is Lord James Stuart, afterwards Regent Murray, with the Earl of Glencairne beyond; the Earl of Morton rests on his sword in front of the Earl of Argyll; the Countess of Argyll, half-sister to Queen Mary, is next to the Queen. In the gallery are Sir Patrick Learmonth, the boy Andrew Melville, and many professors of St. Andrews University. Below the gallery on the left are a group of Roman Catholic dignitaries.

The picture, exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1832, is now in the new Tate Gallery, which was opened in August 1897.

41. *The Preaching of Knox* (*Wilkie*).

GETTY CENTER LIBRARY
3 3125 00007 6337